

Negro Romance



OCT.
10¢
NO. 3



MY LOVE BETRAYED ME
FATEFUL DECISION • SPITE!

Sweethearts

TWO HANDS IN A SINGLE BOND!



TWO HEARTS IN LOVE!

Can conquer time itself and face the trials and tribulations of each new day.

But the *search for love* is the most poignant, the most intense of all emotional adventures.

Here are the living, breathing, vital, true-to-life picture-stories in full color!

10¢ ON YOUR FAVORITE NEWSSTANDS ACROSS THE NATION **10¢**

The Fateful Decision

OH, BILL... SOB... I-I HAVE NO ONE TO TURN TO! YOU MUST HELP ME STOP HIM BEFORE HE DESTROYS EVERYTHING WORTHWHILE IN MY LIFE!

HAVEN'T YOU ALREADY DESTROYED WHAT WAS FINE AND BEAUTIFUL IN MINE? I WARNED YOU AGAINST HIM --AND I GAVE YOU MY LOVE! BUT YOU CHOSE TO LAUGH IN MY FACE AND FLING CAUTION TO THE WINDS. BUT NOW YOU COME TO ME!

This was the night of decision. The chill rain glazed the streets, mirroring the broken light patterns from above. The one mistake Sylvia had made had risen like an isolated pebble swelling into a disastrous avalanche now threatening to engulf her blameless sister and the one man who would always possess her heart! She was going to her beloved to beg, plead for forgiveness. Would he take her back now... after all she had done?

It had been a wearingly long week of walking city streets and trying one agency after another for work, since I'd lost my job in Bayville. My sister Shiela needed the tuition to enter college and I was determined she would have an opportunity that I missed...

THE DON-CAMER SURGICAL INSTRUMENT COMPANY! ACCORDING TO THIS CARD IT SHOULD BE RIGHT AROUND HERE! GOSH, THE CITY IS A BIG PLACE! I SURE HOPE THE JOB ISN'T FILLED YET!

I found the office with little difficulty and was admitted courteously. There, I was confronted by a slender, quietly handsome young man who was destined to alter the course of my life!

I--I'M APPLYING FOR THE SECRETARY'S POSITION. WHOM DO I SPEAK TO ABOUT IT?

HAVE A SEAT AND WE'LL DISCUSS YOUR QUALIFICATIONS!

I felt strangely discomfited under his clear, unwavering appraisal.

He was polite though quite perfunctory as he placed my application with the rest after our interview. There was a cafeteria downstairs, and I went in for lunch immediately after.

Presently --



OH, HELLO, THERE! I DIDN'T EXPECT WE'D MEET AGAIN SO SOON. MIND IF I SIT DOWN?

NO, OF COURSE NOT.



SAY, I'M SORRY I DIDN'T INTRODUCE MYSELF. I GUESS I'M ALWAYS A LITTLE TOO PREOCCUPIED FOR PROPER ETIQUETTE. I'M BILL CAMER.

WHY-- THEN YOU'RE ONE OF THE PARTNERS OF THE FIRM!

There was a kind of vibrance about his smile that instantly exposed a warm, ingenuous quality beneath the business-like soberness I'd noticed in the office. I caught myself staring with open admiration...

YOU MAKE IT SOUND PRETTY IMPORTANT! A PARTNER OF THE FIRM! OF COURSE, IT IS TO ME. BUT ACTUALLY WE'RE A YOUNG OUTFIT! I STARTED IT WHEN I LEFT THE SERVICE. SAY-- WHAT ARE YOU EATING? IT LOOKS GOOD!



YOU MUST BE HUNGRY! IT'S JUST OLD-FASHIONED HAM AND EGGS. AND APPLE PIE FOR DESSERT.

OF COURSE, THERE'S NO APPLE PIE LIKE THE KIND WE MAKE BACK IN BAYVILLE! THAT'S MY HOME TOWN, AND IT'S APPLE ORCHARD COUNTRY! I CAN BAKE ONE THREE INCHES HIGH!

YOU CAN BAKE APPLE PIE? I HAVEN'T TASTED ONE IN YEARS! YOU'LL HAVE ME BEGGING FOR AN INVITATION! GIRLS WHO BAKE THESE DAYS ARE A RARITY!



He was young and, well--sweet would best describe it. Before long we were real friends and I felt almost as if I was talking to a boy from back home.

I was sorry when we rose to go...



THEN YOU'LL SHOW UP PROMPTLY AT NINE TOMORROW MORNING?

Y-YOU MEAN THAT I'M HIRED? BUT MY APPLICATION--



I LIKE YOU, AND THAT'S IMPORTANT IN HIRING A SECRETARY! YOUR RÉSUMÉ INDICATES THAT YOU HAVE ALL THE EXPERIENCE YOU NEED-- UNLESS, YOU WANT TO TALK ME OUT OF IT!

OH, NO! I MEAN-- I'D LIKE TO HAVE THE JOB VERY MUCH!



SWELL! THEN I'LL COUNT ON SEEING YOU IN THE MORNING! 'BYE, NOW!

I'LL BE THERE, ALL RIGHT!



From the beginning, we got on wonderfully well together. He was amiable and pleasant at all times, though there was an air of ambitious persistence about him, an unlagging determination to make good. It was easy to think of him as more than just a boss...

HEY! YOU STILL HERE? FIRST THING YOU KNOW, THEY'LL BE ACCUSING ME OF SLAVE LABOR! COME ON, NOW -- OUT YOU GO!

I WAS JUST TRYING TO IMPRESS THE BOSS! SOMEDAY I EXPECT HIM TO BE A BIG CORPORATION PRESIDENT WITH ALL THAT DRIVE OF HIS-- AND MAYBE I CAN GET TO BE HIS ASSISTANT!

I KNOW! YOU'VE JUST BEEN HANGING AROUND FOR ME TO TAKE YOU OUT TO DINNER! WELL, YOU WIN! LET'S GO!

HOW DID YOU GUESS? BUT I WARN YOU, I'M AS HUNGRY AS A BEAR JUST OUT OF HIBERNATION!

I think that despite our lighthearted banter, we both knew that there was an element of truth beneath it all. I had wanted him to take me out, and I knew he felt the same way. We drove out to a rustic spot...

GOSH! IT'S BEEN SO MUCH FUN, BILL!

LET'S GO OUT ON THE TERRACE WHERE IT'S COOL.

SYLVIA -- CAN YOU FORGET I'M BOSS LONG ENOUGH FOR ME TO TELL YOU SOMETHING PERSONAL?

YES, BILL... WHAT IS IT?

He started to say something with apparent effort. His face was dizzyingly close and his lips a bare inch away from mine. Then they touched! The sky was an ebony sea with turbulent wavelets of shimmering stars! Magic was the night! Enchanted, my heart!

I THINK THAT TELLS YOU WHAT I MEAN MORE EFFECTIVELY THAN WORDS!

OH, YES -- BILL! YES!

NEGRO ROMANCE



AS THE SHY MAIDEN ONCE SAID-- THIS IS ALL SO SUDDEN! BUT SERIOUSLY, SYLVIA, I HOPE WE CAN COME TO MEAN A LOT TO EACH OTHER!

YOU ARE SWEET, BILL!

I relived the rapturous moment of that kiss for many weeks. Bill was too frantically occupied with office detail to ask me out, again, and when at last he did--

HONEY-- BEFORE I FORGET! THAT DATE I HOPEFULLY MADE THIS MORNING! IT'S OFF-- DON JUST SENT ME A LONG ORDER THAT'S GOT TO BE FILLED FOR THE RASMUTH HOSPITAL! GIVE ME A RAINCHECK?

SURE, BILL! I REALLY DIDN'T SEE HOW YOU WERE GOING TO MAKE IT ANYWAY!



I UNDERSTAND THAT YOUR BUSINESS COMES FIRST!

WELL, CONSIDER IT AN INVESTMENT FOR THE FUTURE-- OUR FUTURE!

I was very grateful for the job, but it was routine after all, and I was away from home and the things that were comfortingly familiar. A little lonely, I guess. Then, one day, the door was opened with a flourish and a handsomely tall man eyed me with a veiled glance that was disturbingly suggestive...



UMM! THEN YOU'RE THE NEW SECRETARY BILL WROTE ME ABOUT! WELL--HIS TASTE SURE IS IMPROVING!

I--I DON'T UNDERSTAND...



I'M DON -- THE BETTER HALF OF DON-CAMER, ETCETERA COMPANY!

OH--! I- I'VE HEARD A LOT ABOUT YOU FROM BILL, I MEAN, MR. CAMER.



THAT WAS ALL SECOND-HAND! I'LL HAVE TO TELL YOU ALL ABOUT ME, PERSONALLY! TONIGHT WILL DO FINE! WE'RE ALL THREE OF US GOING OUT TO THE RIOBAMBA NIGHTCLUB TO CELEBRATE MY RETURN!

I-I DON'T THINK MR. CAMER WILL BE ABLE TO MAKE IT. HE HAS A DESK FULL OF WORK!



I WONDERED WHAT ALL THE RACKET WAS ABOUT! I SHOULD HAVE KNOWN IT WAS THE PRODIGAL SON!

HI, YOU OLD DESK EXECUTIVE! PAPA HAS COME HOME AND THERE'S GOING TO BE SOME ACTION! IT STARTS TONIGHT AND I DON'T TAKE NO FOR AN ANSWER!

NEGRO ROMANCE

Unaffectedly good looking, Don was as flamboyant as Bill was steady. He radiated a charm that was almost irresistible. The week following was a whirlwind of exciting evenings out. Bill went along only to appease Don...

I THINK WE'D BETTER GO BACK TO THE TABLE. BILL MUST BE FEELING NEGLECTED.

I MEANT TO SURRENDER YOU FOR THIS DANCE, BUT IT'S A TANGO! AND THAT'S MY SPECIALTY!



I'M GOING TO PAUSE FOR A FULL MINUTE SO I CAN THINK UP ALL THE ADJECTIVES TO DESCRIBE JUST HOW STUNNING YOU ARE, SYLVIA!

I'VE NEVER MET ANYONE LIKE YOU, DON-- YOU POSITIVELY MAKE MY HEAD SWIM!



YOU READY? HERE GOES! YOU'RE ENCHANTING, BEWITCHING, CAPTIVATING--

OH, DON! DON'T -- PEOPLE ARE STARING!



WELL, THEN -- COME OUT TO THE CAR WHERE I CAN TELL YOU PRIVATELY!

BUT, DON! BILL IS WAITING FOR US AT THE TABLE!



But he was so persuasive! "We'll just be a minute," he said. After we had sat in the car awhile, I asked him to return to the club, but he silenced my request with an embrace that stole my breath away!



Y-YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE DONE THAT, DON!

WHY NOT? I BELIEVE IN FOLLOWING MY IMPULSES! STICK AROUND ME AND YOU'LL HAVE PLENTY OF CHANCE TO GIVE MY PHILOSOPHY A WHIRL! RIGHT NOW -- I'VE THE URGE TO TAKE YOU FOR A LONG, FAST RIDE! BILL WON'T MIND! HE'S KNOWN ME TOO LONG TO BE SURPRISED AT WHAT I DO!



My objection was not sufficiently emphatic. Don grinned knowingly and sent the high-powered car roaring into the veiled shadows of night. Oh, why couldn't I have seen then, that this was a fatal fascination that could harbor only a remorseful aftermath? In the office the next morning--

I'M SORRY ABOUT LAST NIGHT, BILL -- BUT DON MOVES TOO FAST FOR ME EVEN TO THINK!

IT'S ALL RIGHT, SYLVIA. YOU DIDN'T KNOW DON OR WHAT HE WAS LIKE. HE STILL ACTS LIKE AN IRRESPONSIBLE KID AT TIMES, ALTHOUGH HE'S OKAY IF KEPT UNDER CONTROL. I'LL SEE YOU LATER.



HI, THERE, MORNING GLORY! HERE'S SOMETHING TO CROWN YOUR LOVELINESS! AND ALSO TO REMOVE THE TAIN OF BILL'S

WHY, DON, A RING! IT'S BEAUTIFUL! BUT I COULDN'T ACCEPT THAT!



COME ON, NOW! THAT'S JUST SILLY CONVENTION! I MET YOU AND I ADMIRE YOU. I REALLY WANT YOU TO HAVE IT. IT'S AS SIMPLE AS THAT! NO OBLIGATIONS, NO ULTERIOR MOTIVES--CROSS MY HEART!

IT IS REALLY THE MOST STUNNING RING I'VE EVER SEEN AND I ADORE IT, BUT--

He pressed the glittering little gift into my hand and closed my fingers over it in a manner that took its acceptance for granted. He knew my hesitancy to be in his favor and he stepped away with the air of one who had just made a conquest--



NOW YOU WEAR THAT WHEN I TAKE YOU OUT TO DINNER THIS EVENING! I'LL BE ON YOUR DOORSTEP AT NINE WITH ORCHIDS AND PLANS TO BRING OUT THE HIDDEN MAGIC IN THOSE EYES! CONSIDER ALL YOUR OTHER DATES BROKEN!

YOU'RE TOO SURE OF YOURSELF! HOW DO YOU KNOW I'LL BE THERE?



But Don knew with the certainty of many experiences. That was only the first of many gifts. I learned to accept them without any qualms, enthusiastic about my possession of them, eagerly looking forward to the next I would receive. While Bill was absorbed with his work, Don continued to spend lavishly to entertain me. One evening...

I GUESS I'M JUST IN TIME! ANOTHER MINUTE AND I WOULD HAVE MISSED YOU. I'M SHOVING EVERYTHING ASIDE JUST TO SPEND TONIGHT WITH YOU, SYLVIA. IT'S BEEN HARD HAVING YOU NEAR AND BEING STUCK TO THE DESK!

I-I'M SORRY, BILL --DON IS TAKING ME OUT.



OH... SAY, THAT'S A NICE RING. IT'S NEW, ISN'T IT? I HAVEN'T SEEN YOU WEAR IT BEFORE.

THE RING?... WHY--UH--DON GAVE IT TO ME.



I DON'T WANT YOU TO GET THE WRONG IMPRESSION OF WHAT I'M GOING TO SAY, SYLVIA. IT'S ONLY BECAUSE I'M CONCERNED ABOUT YOU. DON DOESN'T THINK OR CARE OF CONSEQUENCES IN ANYTHING HE DOES. HE'S NOT THE ONE TO BE TAKING PRESENTS FROM OR SPENDING SO MUCH TIME WITH!



YOU MAKE HIM OUT TO BE PRETTY MUCH OF AN UNTOUCHABLE, DON'T YOU, BILL? AFTER ALL -- HE'S YOUR PARTNER!

I knew it was all wrong getting involved with Don, right from the beginning-- particularly with the understanding between Bill and me! But his strangely inexhaustible generosity was a temptation too great for denial. I chose to dismiss Bill's remarks as prompted by jealousy alone--

WHAT'S GOING ON? IS BILL A LITTLE PEEVED BECAUSE I'M BEATING HIS TIME?

THERE'S A LOT MORE I HAVE TO SAY TO YOU -- PRIVATELY! IT HAS SOMETHING TO DO WITH YOUR HAVING SO MUCH READY CASH TO FLING TO THE WINDS!



IT'LL HAVE TO WAIT! SOMETHING IMPORTANT JUST CAME UP!

AND I'LL HAVE TO BREAK OUR DATE FOR TONIGHT, SYLVIA!



There was a long interval of tension-fraught silence after Don left. But Bill touched my hand reassuringly, and his smile was as welcome as the sun on a winter's frost! We dined quietly, without saying much, and later --

I'VE NEVER SAID IT IN SO MANY WORDS, SYLVIA -- BUT I -- I LOVE YOU VERY MUCH! AND I DON'T WANT TO SEE ANYTHING SPOIL THE WONDERFUL LIFE I KNOW WE CAN SHARE TOGETHER!

BUT NOTHING WILL, BILL... WHY SHOULD IT?



It was as though some intangible force compelled the entwining of our arms, the blending of our eager lips!

MY DARLING!



JUST GIVE DON BACK HIS GIFTS AND STEER CLEAR OF HIM, DEAR -- AND WE'LL BE RIGHT BACK ON A STRAIGHT COURSE! TRUST ME, SYLVIA. THERE ARE THINGS ABOUT HIM I CAN'T EVEN TELL YOU!

BUT THE GIFTS ARE SO LOVELY -- AND THEY'RE WORTH QUITE A LOT! BILL'S JUST JEALOUS BECAUSE HE HASN'T GIVEN ME ANYTHING!



BUT WHAT COULD YOU POSSIBLY BE THINKING THAT YOU HESITATE? IT CAN ONLY MEAN THAT YOU VALUE HIS GIFTS AND HIS COMPANY MORE THAN THE WAY WE FEEL ABOUT EACH OTHER! IF THAT'S THE WAY YOU WANT IT, SYLVIA, IT'S YOUR CHOICE. FROM NOW ON WE'LL KEEP IT STRICTLY A BUSINESS RELATIONSHIP!



My heartbeat seemed to grow more faint with the departing sound of his footsteps, but stubbornly I remained rooted to that spot! After that incident, he scarcely looked at me. He spoke only concerning office detail. I was going with Don now, every day. Then one morning I entered the office to hear...



OKAY -- HOW DO YOU FIGURE I'VE BEEN POCKETING THE MONEY?

LET'S NOT PLAY GAMES, DON! I'VE KNOWN YOUR TACTICS SINCE WE'VE BEEN KIDS, BUT I FIGURED YOU'D FOR ONCE IN YOUR LIFE DEAL SQUARELY! YOU'VE BEEN JACKING UP THE PRICES OF OUR ITEMS AND KEEPING THE DIFFERENCE YOURSELF!

ALL THIS ACCOUNTS FOR YOUR CAR AND CLOTHES AND SPRINKLING SYLVIA AND THAT OTHER LITTLE FRIEND OF YOURS WITH TRINKETS! YOU'RE A LOW CHARACTER!

I'M NOT STANDING FOR ANY MORE OF THIS GUFF! SYLVIA, I'M PULLING OUT OF HERE TO START MY OWN BUSINESS! COME WITH ME AND I'LL TRIPLE YOUR SALARY!



DON'T GO, SYLVIA! IT'S NOT WORTH WHAT YOU'LL GET MIXED UP IN!

THREE TIMES WHAT I'M GETTING PAID HERE! WOULD YOU BE WILLING TO EQUAL THAT OFFER?

SO THAT'S IT? YOU'RE TWO OF A KIND! I WAS FOOLISH TO TRY TO REASON WITH YOU! GO ON, THE BOTH OF YOU -- CLEAR OUT!

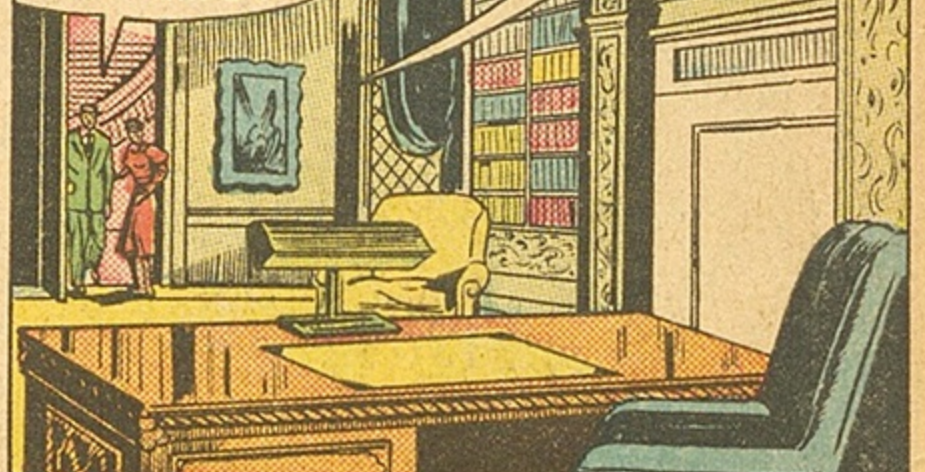
LET'S GO! IT'S ABOUT TIME WE SHOOK THIS SMALL-OPERATION STUFF OUT OF OUR HAIR! NOW WE CAN START LIVING!



I tried to harden my heart against Bill's vitriolic attack! But the pained disillusionment in his eyes was a memory I would bear with me forever! The activities of the next week were mercifully hectic enough to keep my mind from returning to Bill --

NOW THAT I'VE RENTED THIS PLACE, WE'RE ALL SET TO GO! WE CAN'T MISS!

I'VE NEVER SEEN SUCH LUXURIOUS OFFICES, DON!



HERE ARE THE EVENING GOWNS, MR. GRANNICK.

EVENING GOWNS? THEY'RE STUNNING!

THEY'RE ALL FOR YOU, HONEY! YOU'LL BE HAVING A LOT OF USE FOR THEM FROM NOW ON! WE'LL CALL IT A BUSINESS INVESTMENT!



Ours was to be an investment counseling service, Don said. I was to be an important "good will" feature. Attired in these stunningly seductive gowns, I went night-clubbing every evening with Don.

Always, several affluent business men would find me interesting to talk to -- and one way or another, the discussion was steered to investments. And then --

THAT SOUNDS LIKE A FINE OPPORTUNITY, MR. GRANNICK. WILL YOU ACCEPT MY CHECK FOR A SIZEABLE INVESTMENT?

WHY, OF COURSE. BUT I'D JUST AS SOON YOU DIDN'T PASS THE WORD AROUND. WE BELIEVE IN CONDUCTING OUR BUSINESS DURING THE DAY AND NOT HAVING OUR RECREATION INTERRUPTED.



We were incredibly successful. Don was a smooth, convincing talker--and once I met the prospective investors, it was just a matter of time.

I bought a car of my own now, moved to an exclusive apartment and denied myself nothing.

But Don began to gall me, and I was missing Bill more and more--

PLEASE, DON, I DON'T WANT YOU TO COME INTO MY APARTMENT. MAYBE I AM SILLY, BUT I JUST WOULDN'T FEEL RIGHT ABOUT IT!

COME ON, HONEY! CUT THE THEATRICS! YOU'RE TALKING TO DON, REMEMBER? THE GUY WHO'S BOUGHT YOU ALL THE CLOTHES ON YOUR BACK!



NOW THAT YOU'VE GOT EVERYTHING YOU WANT, YOU DON'T HAVE TO PUT ON ANY AIRS WITH ME!

EVERYTHING I WANT... YES!



COME OVER HERE AND LET'S TALK SENSE!

GET YOUR HANDS OFF ME! DON'T EVER THINK YOU'VE GOT THE RIGHT TO DO THAT!

SMACK!



I choked back tears! How different he was from Bill! Tenderly sweet and gentle Bill who made me feel that I was the only girl in the world!

YOU'RE STILL EATING YOUR HEART OUT OVER BILL! I'VE KNOWN THAT ALL ALONG! BUT YOU'LL GET OVER IT!



For the past few months, I'd been sending more than sufficient money to my sister Sheila at college--and my glowing letters had described Don's amazing acumen for amassing a fortune. I never really faced the illegitimacy of his methods, until one morning--

YOU'RE NOTHING MORE THAN AN OUTRIGHT THIEF! YOU TOOK MY FUNDS UNDER THE PRETEXT OF INVESTING THEM, AND YOU KEPT THEM! AND WITH OTHERS YOU TRUMP UP PHONY SECURITIES!

YOU'RE JUST UPSET, MR. TREMAINE! I'M SORRY WE MADE AN UNFORTUNATE INVESTMENT--BUT WE ARE NOT INFALLIBLE!



THEN THAT'S THE WAY YOU'VE BEEN DOING THINGS! YOU'RE NO BETTER THAN A CROOK! BILL WAS RIGHT!

NOW, NOW, MY CHARMING LITTLE FRIEND--YOU MUSTN'T GET OUT OF HAND JUST BECAUSE YOU HEARD A FEW IDLE REMARKS FROM AN OVER-EXCITED CLIENT!



NEGRO ROMANCE

The mask of superficial charm was now torn aside without caution-- and the face beneath it was cruel and despicable! I trembled at the thought that I had encouraged his interest!

NEVER FORGET THAT YOU'RE IN THIS THING JUST AS DEEP AS I AM! YOU'VE PLAYED THE SAME KIND OF GAME! BUT WE'RE IN THE CLEAR. THESE CHARACTERS ARE TOO PROUD OF THEIR BUSINESS REPUTATION TO ADMIT THEY'VE BEEN TAKEN IN BY THE OLD CONFIDENCE GAME!

NOW COME HERE AND LET'S FORGET ALL THIS! WE USED TO BE PRETTY GOOD FRIENDS. LET'S KEEP IT THAT WAY!

...SOB... LET ME GO! LET ME GO!



I had a telegram the next day that my sister was coming up to visit me on vacation from school... I stayed home that day, and apparently she had stopped off at the office first. At two a.m., the doorbell rang and I opened the door, shocked at the sight...

YOU'RE A RIOT, HONEY! AND WHAT A KNOCKOUT! YOU AND I ARE REALLY GOING TO GO PLACES!

SHEILA!

WELL--! WHY DIDN'T YOU TELL ME YOU HAD THIS GORGEOUS LITTLE CREATURE TUCKED AWAY IN SOME COLLEGE!

COME INSIDE, SHEILA -- ALONE! I WANT TO TALK TO YOU! NOW!



WHY DID YOU GO OUT WITH DON? YOU SHOULD HAVE COME TO ME AND ASKED ME FIRST! HE'S ROTTEN CLEAR THROUGH AND YOU MUSTN'T SO MUCH AS GO NEAR HIM AGAIN!

BUT WHY NOT? HE'S SO HANDSOME AND SO MUCH FUN! AND YOU WROTE ME SO MANY TERRIFIC THINGS ABOUT HIM!

But Sheila was young and impressionable. What could she be expected to know of a man like Don? At least I had had an insight I had refused to heed before! But despite my reasoning with her, she began going with Don, playing the part that I had for so many months. And I knew, it wasn't her sin-- it was my own!

DON'T START THAT AGAIN WITH ME, SYLVIA! JUST BECAUSE HE PREFERS ME TO YOU, YOU NEEDN'T CARRY ON LIKE THAT AND CREATE INSANE STORIES! I'M NOT GOING TO STOP GOING WITH HIM!

NO, SHEILA! YOU CAN'T! HE'LL RUIN YOUR LIFE! PLEASE -- YOU MUST LISTEN TO ME! I SHOULD HAVE LISTENED ONCE AND I DIDN'T!



NEGRO ROMANCE

I flung myself across my bed and sobbed until I thought my heart would fail from the excruciating agony of regret! My chance was gone and I mourned that with bitter tears! But now, it would happen to Sheila, too! In desperation I went to the only person in the world who could help me Bill!

YOU COME TO ME NOW FOR HELP! DID YOU EVER STOP TO THINK WHAT YOU DID TO MY LIFE? DID YOU EVER THINK OF MY LOVE FOR YOU? NOW YOU CAN UNDERSTAND HOW I'VE SUFFERED?

...SOB... I'M SORRY, BILL! ... SOB... I-I'M ... SOB... SORRY...



And as I turned away, the tears blurring my eyes and choking in my throat—I knew that Bill was right for everything he felt! Then, when I went back to the apartment, the world collapsed!

WE'RE TAKING OFF! CLEARING OUT OF THIS TOWN! SO LONG!

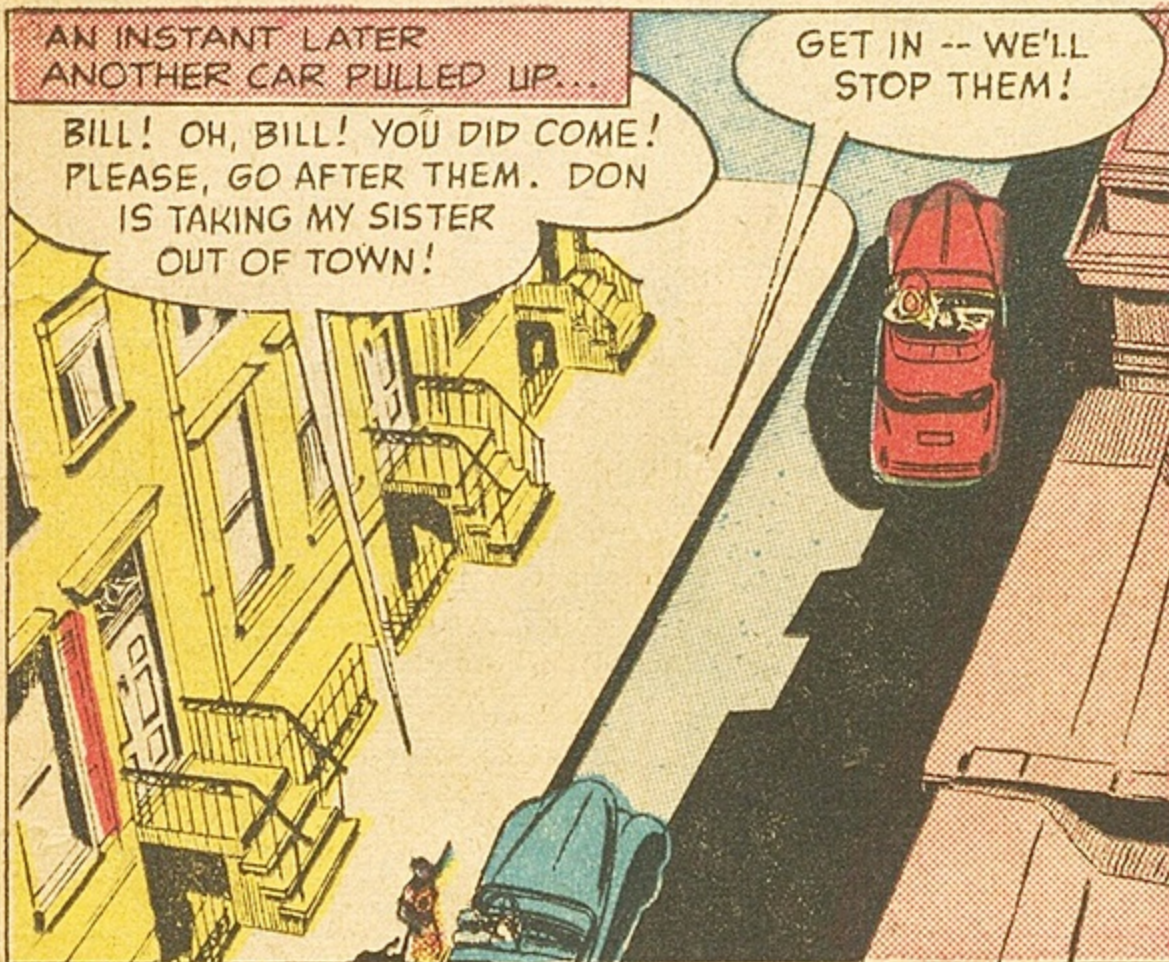
NO! STOP! YOU MUSTN'T TAKE SHEILA WITH YOU!



AN INSTANT LATER ANOTHER CAR PULLED UP...

BILL! OH, BILL! YOU DID COME! PLEASE, GO AFTER THEM. DON IS TAKING MY SISTER OUT OF TOWN!

GET IN -- WE'LL STOP THEM!



It was a wild, hazardous race to catch up with a piece of my life that had gone foolishly astray! Don's recklessness was almost maniacal, but Bill steeled himself and inched up steadily! I heard Sheila scream! It was the fear of a frightened child. She had become aware of her danger now!

STOP, PLEASE, DON! I DON'T WANT TO GO WITH YOU! I CHANGED MY MIND!

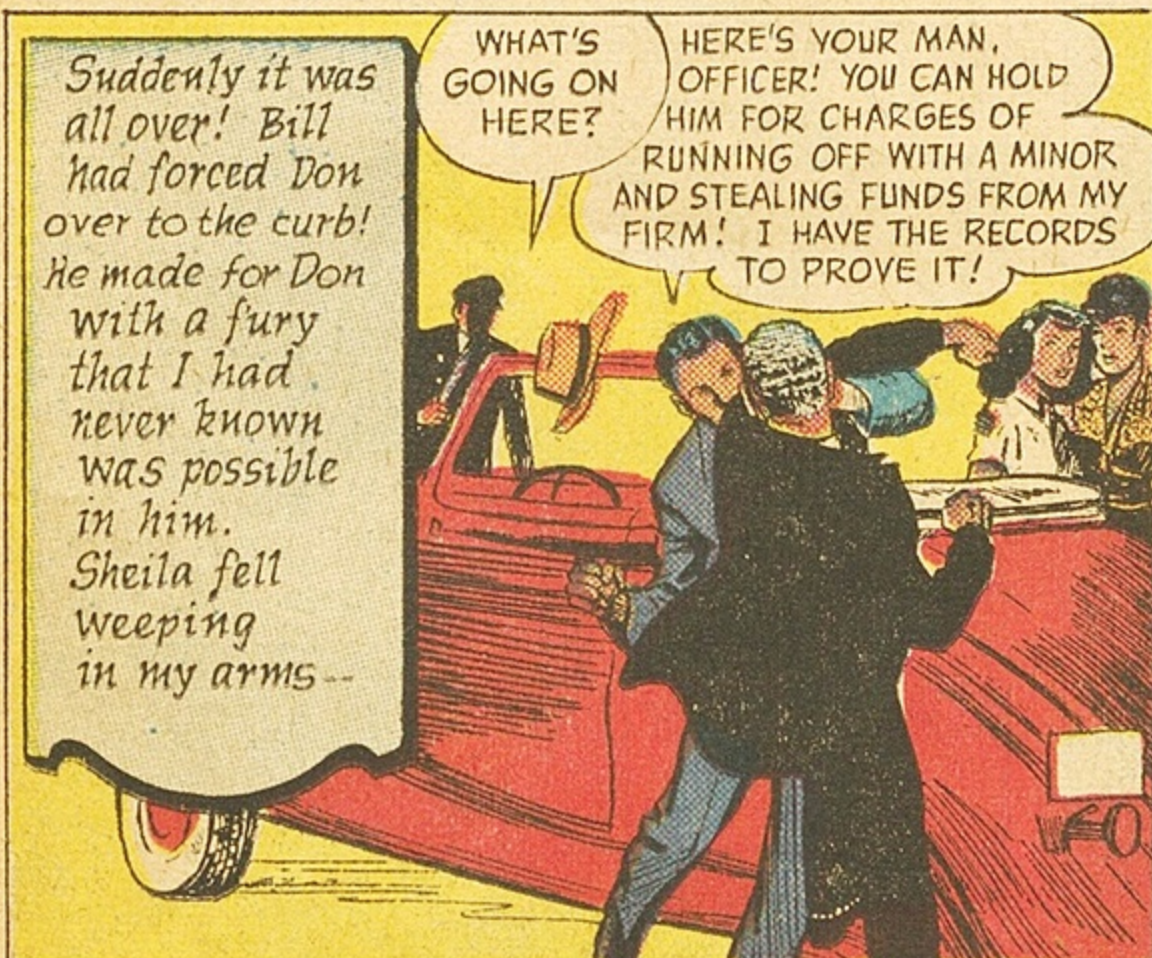
EASY, HONEY! THIS IS NOTHING AT ALL! I'VE BEEN IN TIGHTER SQUEEZES THAN THIS A LOT OF TIMES!



Suddenly it was all over! Bill had forced Don over to the curb! He made for Don with a fury that I had never known was possible in him. Sheila fell weeping in my arms--

WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?

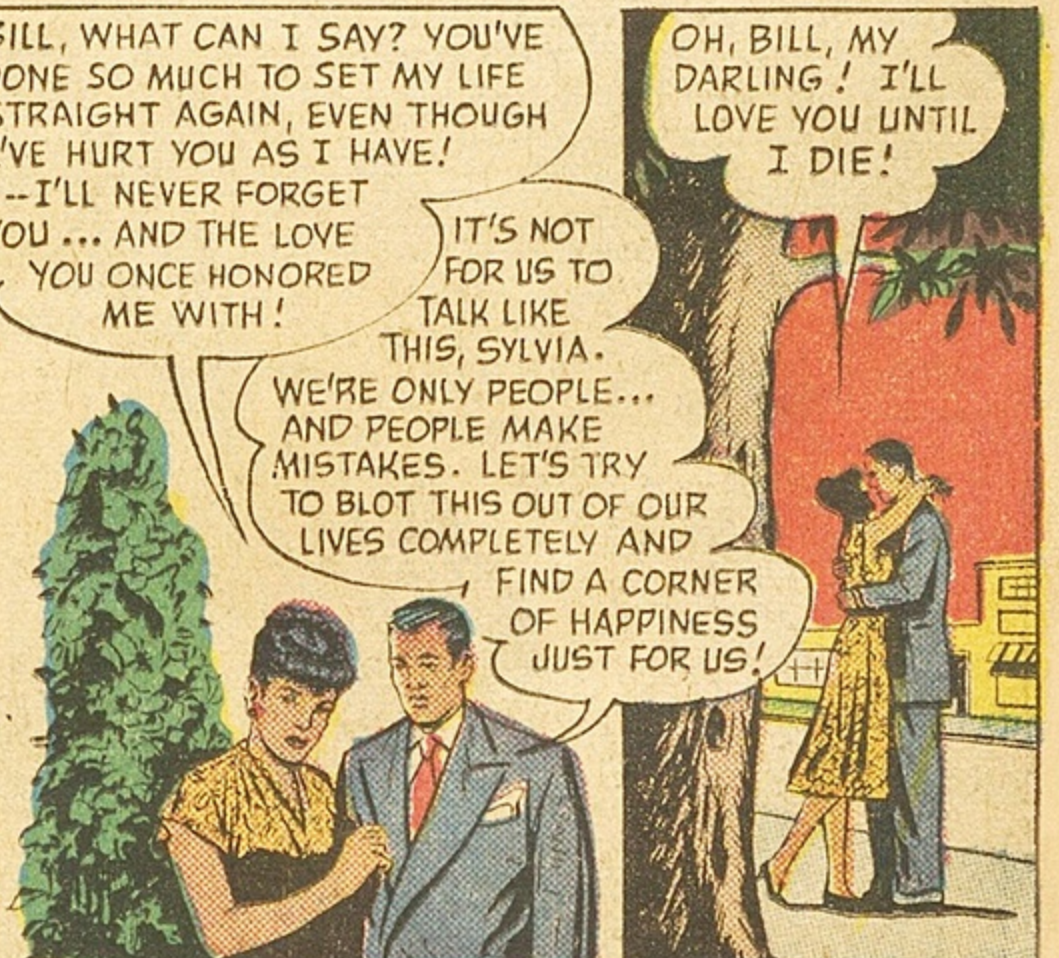
HERE'S YOUR MAN, OFFICER! YOU CAN HOLD HIM FOR CHARGES OF RUNNING OFF WITH A MINOR AND STEALING FUNDS FROM MY FIRM! I HAVE THE RECORDS TO PROVE IT!



BILL, WHAT CAN I SAY? YOU'VE DONE SO MUCH TO SET MY LIFE STRAIGHT AGAIN, EVEN THOUGH I'VE HURT YOU AS I HAVE! I--I'LL NEVER FORGET YOU ... AND THE LOVE YOU ONCE HONORED ME WITH!

IT'S NOT FOR US TO TALK LIKE THIS, SYLVIA.

WE'RE ONLY PEOPLE... AND PEOPLE MAKE MISTAKES. LET'S TRY TO BLOT THIS OUT OF OUR LIVES COMPLETELY AND FIND A CORNER OF HAPPINESS JUST FOR US!



OH, BILL, MY DARLING! I'LL LOVE YOU UNTIL I DIE!

My Love

BETRAYED ME

I'M THE BOY WHO LOVES HER. WHY WON'T SHE ACCEPT MY LOVE?

I'M HER STEPMOTHER, AND I WANT ONLY THE BEST FOR HER... YET SHE HATES ME!

I'M HER FATHER, BUT HOW CAN I REACH HER... MAKE HER UNDERSTAND?

The instant Sara crossed the threshold of Margie's little world, trying to make her existence a richer, fuller one—she was branded **INTRUDER!**

Margie distorted her every overture of friendliness, nursed each petty grievance, enlarged upon imagined fears—until Sara suffered the curse of a stepmother, unloved and unwanted!

NOBODY LOVES OR UNDERSTANDS ME! THERE'S A CONSPIRACY AGAINST ME!

Mother died when I was a child. For several years, Dad and I lived alone... and I was wonderfully happy. I took care of the house and loved Dad with all my heart. But then he remarried and brought his new wife into **MY** house. I hated her with all my heart!

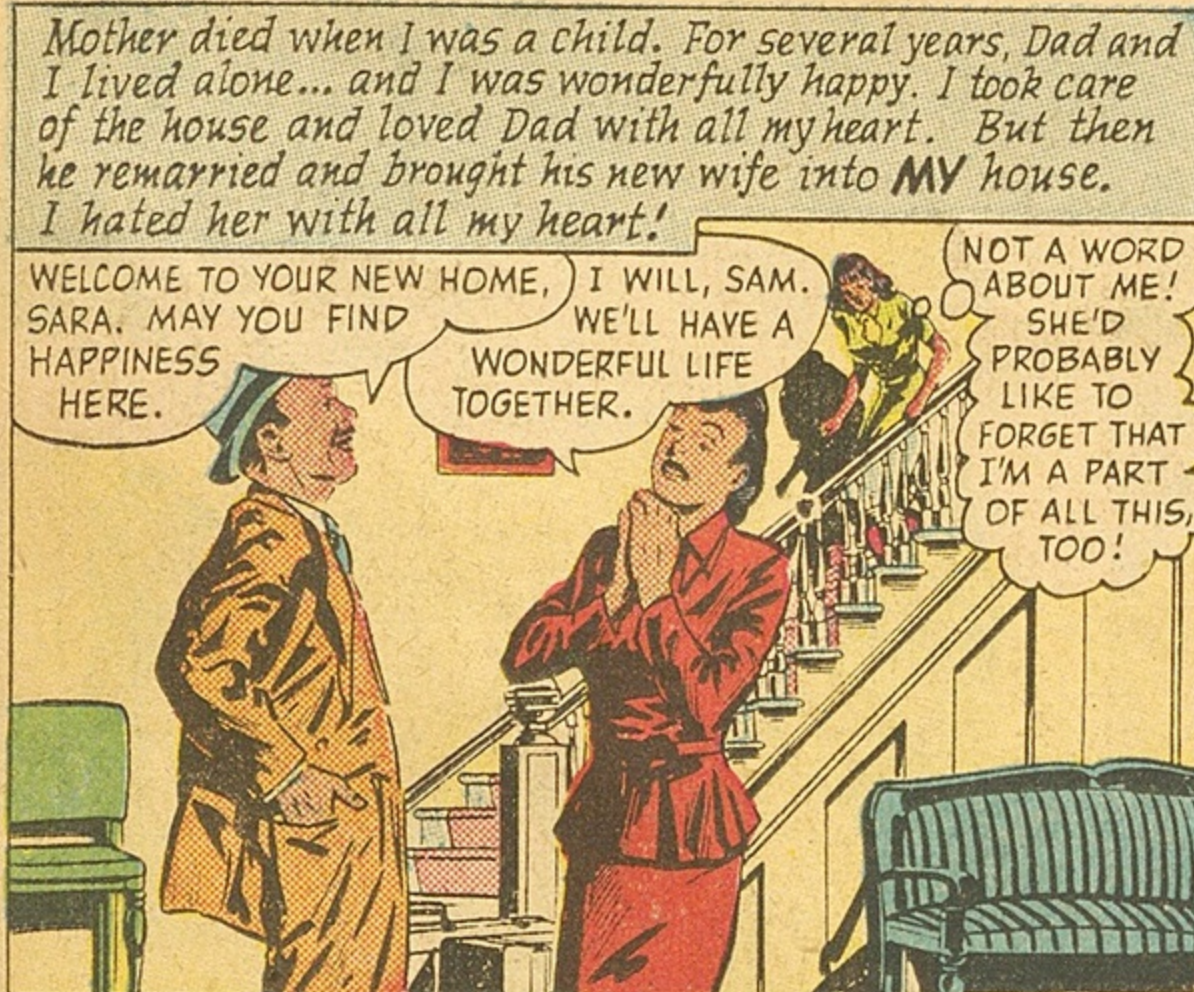
WELCOME TO YOUR NEW HOME, SARA. MAY YOU FIND HAPPINESS HERE.

I WILL, SAM. WE'LL HAVE A WONDERFUL LIFE TOGETHER.

NOT A WORD ABOUT ME! SHE'D PROBABLY LIKE TO FORGET THAT I'M A PART OF ALL THIS, TOO!

IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME, MARGIE, BUT FINALLY YOU HAVE A MOTHER.

A MOTHER... AND A FRIEND. MARGIE AND I ARE GOING TO BE GREAT PALS, AREN'T WE, DEAR?



NEGRO ROMANCE

Sara said we'd be pals! But I was sure I was on to her game. That was to fool my father. She was a ruthless woman who would destroy everything which stood in the way of her complete domination of father. It started almost at once as she followed me to my room...

WHAT A DELIGHTFUL ROOM, MARGIE. I HAVE A WONDERFUL IDEA, DEAR. LET'S GET YOU A DRESSING TABLE FOR RIGHT OVER THERE BETWEEN THE WINDOWS. WE COULD MOVE YOUR BED AROUND AND...

YOU'RE NOT GETTING ME A DRESSING TABLE! AND DON'T YOU DARE TOUCH MY BED!

WHY... MARGIE! I... I DON'T UNDERSTAND.

YOU'VE TAKEN MY FATHER FROM ME... AND NOW YOU WANT TO TAKE OVER MY HOUSE. WELL, THIS IS STILL MY ROOM AND, WHILE IT IS, YOU JUST KEEP OUT!



I attributed Sara's hurt expression to frustrated plotting. After that she never dared enter my room. But Dad remained oblivious to the entire affair. I chose to feel that he was becoming further removed from me each day. Then, one night...

HOW ABOUT GOING TO A MOVIE WITH ME TONIGHT, DAD?

WHY, I'M SORRY, HON... BUT SARA JUST ACCEPTED A DATE FOR US TO PLAY BRIDGE.



SARA PROBABLY PLANNED IT AHEAD OF TIME, KNOWING THAT WE USED TO GO TO THE MOVIES ON FRIDAY NIGHTS! SHE'S JUST TRYING TO KEEP US APART!

MARGIE! YOU CAN'T MEAN THAT! YOU'VE HURT SARA TERRIBLY!

IT... IT'S ALL RIGHT, SAM. I'LL CANCEL THE BRIDGE AND WE'LL ALL GO TO THE MOVIES INSTEAD.



Oh, how clever she was. She would be the noble one and give up her pleasure for me! But I wouldn't let her get away with it! I'd show her up for what she was!

OH, NO! EVER SINCE YOU CAME, YOU'VE BEEN TRYING TO GET RID OF ME... TO SEPARATE ME FROM MY FATHER. NOW YOU EVEN HORN IN ON OUR DATE!

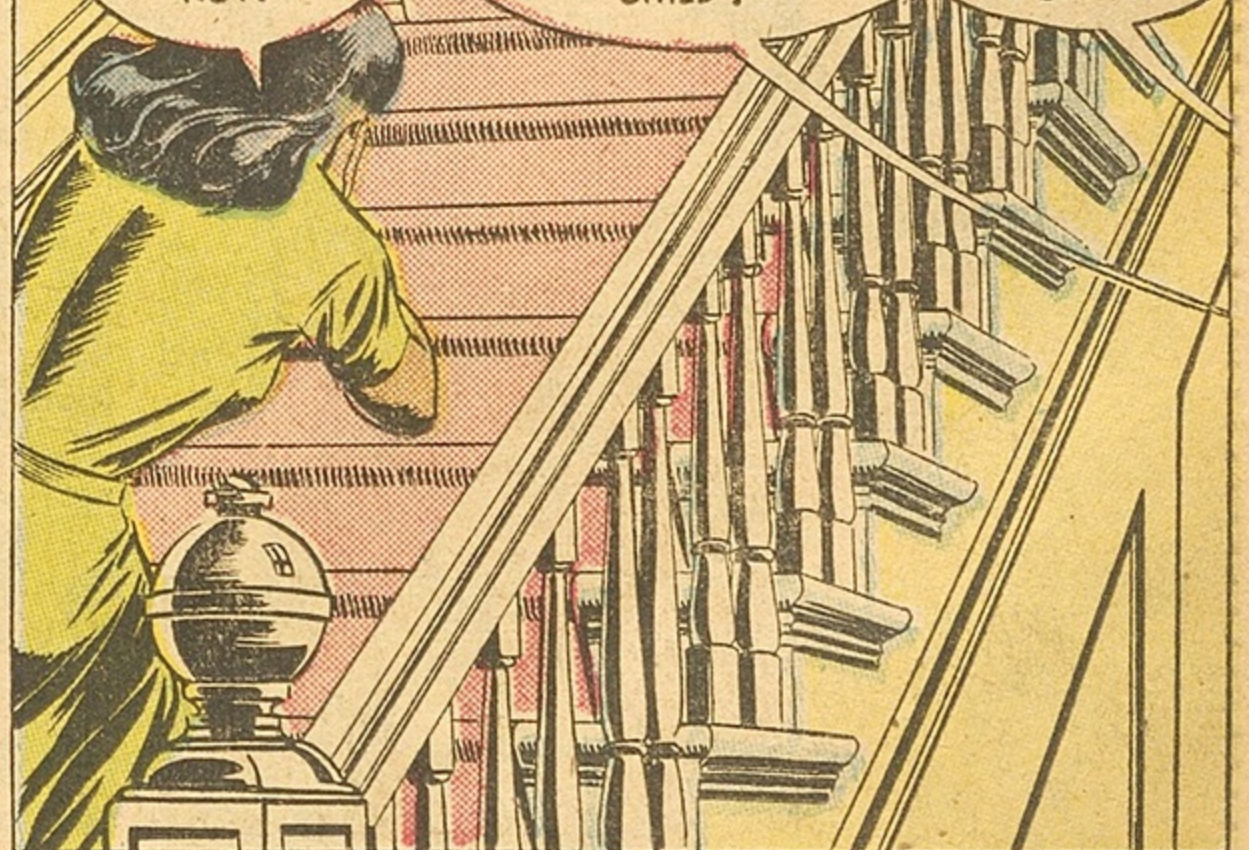
MARGIE! I WON'T HAVE YOU TALKING TO YOUR MOTHER LIKE THIS.



SHE'S NOT MY MOTHER! SHE'S NOT! SHE'S NOT!

MARGIE! COME BACK HERE! YOU'RE BEHAVING LIKE A SPOILED CHILD!

I... I THINK IT'S BEST TO LET HER GO, SAM.



NEGRO ROMANCE

Late that night, after they came back from the bridge game, Sara came into my room...



So that was her new tack...to get me off with some man so I'd forget my father.

Oh, how I despised her dark plotting. But then, strangely, a man did come into my life. We had advertised an extra room for rent, and one day...

HELLO, MY NAME IS DICK HAMMOND AND I UNDERSTAND YOU HAVE A ROOM FOR RENT. MAY I TAKE A LOOK AT IT?

WHY... WHY, YES, OF COURSE. WON'T YOU COME IN?



I don't think I had ever seen anyone quite so handsome and charming. When he smiled at me, my heart pounded uncontrollably and it was all I could do to talk intelligibly...

HEY, THIS IS SWELL. I NEVER HOPED TO FIND SUCH A NICE, BIG, SUNNY ROOM.

IT... IT'S A SOUTHERN EXPOSURE AND YOU GET THE SUN ALL DAY LONG, MR. HAMMOND.



IF I'M GOING TO BE YOUR TENANT, YOU'LL SEE A LOT OF ME. IT'D BE NICE IF YOU DROPPED THE "MISTER" AND JUST CALLED ME "DICK."

ALL RIGHT... DICK. I'M MARGIE.



DO YOU KNOW SOMETHING, MARGIE? I HAVE A HUNCH I'M GOING TO BE HAPPIER HERE THAN I'VE BEEN IN A LONG TIME.

I... I HOPE SO, DICK. I REALLY DO.



NEGRO ROMANCE

When Dick Hammond shook my hand, his grasp was strangely comforting. After he left, I remained in my room, visioning what it would be like to have him under the same roof with me. I couldn't deny that his appearance had made a tremendous impression on me...



Dick was to move in the following day. When Sara came home from shopping that afternoon, I informed her of the rental...

I THINK THAT'S FINE, MARGIE. OF COURSE, WE'LL HAVE TO CHECK HIS REFERENCES BEFORE HE MOVES IN.

YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND, SARA. HE HAS MET **MY** APPROVAL AND THE ROOM IS ALREADY RENTED. IT'S ALL SET.



MARGIE, DEAR, I'M SURE HE'S A PERFECTLY FINE YOUNG MAN. BUT IT'S SENSIBLE TO FIND OUT SOMETHING ABOUT HIM. WE CAN'T HAVE JUST ANYBODY...

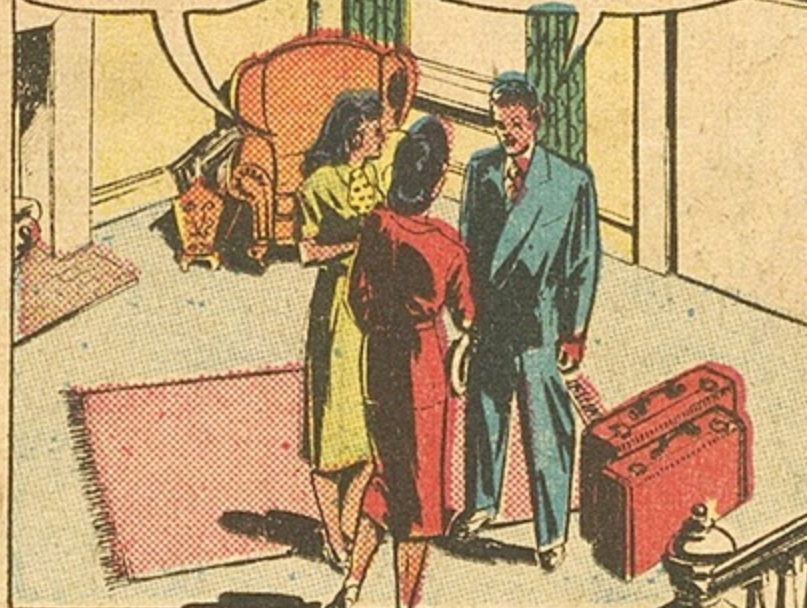
YOU CAN MAKE ALL THE INVESTIGATION YOU LIKE. BUT I WARN YOU, IF YOU TRY TO KEEP HIM OUT OF THAT ROOM, I'LL MAKE THE BIGGEST ROW YOU EVER HEARD!



Next afternoon, when Dick arrived...

THIS IS MY **STEP-MOTHER**, DICK. SHE HAS A SUSPICIOUS NATURE AND WANTS REFERENCES.

DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT. MY HOME TOWN IS THREE OAKS. MY FATHER IS A JUDGE THERE, SO I GUESS I CAN GET PLENTY OF REFERENCES.



THREE OAKS... JUDGE! YOUR SISTER MUST BE SALLY HAMMOND! I'M SARA TILDEN! I ROOMED WITH HER AT COLLEGE!

WELL, WHAT DO YOU KNOW! SHE'S TALKED OF YOU OFTEN!



WHY, I HAVEN'T HEARD FROM YOUR SISTER FOR OVER THREE YEARS. TELL ME ALL ABOUT HER. AND GOSH, YES. I THINK IT'S SWELL. SALLY ALWAYS SAID YOU WERE HER BEST FRIEND, AND I'VE OFTEN WONDERED WHAT YOU WERE REALLY LIKE.

ABOUT HER. AND THINK HOW PLEASED SHE'LL BE TO KNOW YOU'RE STAYING WITH ME.



She took him away from me, just as she had taken daddy... and the house! And there was no way I could strike back. Every direction I turned, she defeated me! And all the time she was probably secretly laughing!

I HATE HER... SOB... I HATE HER! I WISH SHE WERE DEAD!



NEGRO ROMANCE

I made myself scarce for the next few days, determined that Sara would not enjoy the satisfaction of knowing how I felt about Dick. And furthermore, I told myself that if Dick was weak enough to be deceived by Sara, he wasn't the kind I wanted. Oh, but I lied to myself... for I did want him ... terribly! Then, one evening...

HELLO, STRANGER. I HAVEN'T SEEN YOU SINCE I MOVED IN. IF YOU KEEP MAKING YOURSELF SO SCARCE, I'M GOING TO ASK FOR A REDUCTION IN RENT.



HELLO, DICK. I... I'VE JUST BEEN FEELING A BIT ILL THE PAST FEW DAYS.

HOW DO YOU FEEL NOW? RECOVERED ENOUGH TO GO FOR A WALK WITH ME THIS EVENING?

WHY... YES, DICK. I... I'D LOVE TO.



That was the first of many magic evenings. He was tall and straight at my side. His easy smile lit up my world. I knew that if he ever took me in his arms, all the bitterness of my life would melt away. One night, on our way home from the movies...

I'VE HAD A LOT OF FUN THESE PAST FEW WEEKS, DICK...

YOU'VE MADE IT FUN, MARGIE. I'VE CERTAINLY BEEN LUCKY-- MOVING HERE -- WITH YOU AND SARA ... SHE'S SWELL, ISN'T SHE?



I... I FIND SARA A VERY RUTHLESS, UNPRINCIPLED WOMAN. AND I'D RATHER NOT TALK ABOUT HER.

W-WHAT? I THOUGHT SHE WAS WONDERFUL. AND MY SISTER USED TO SAY THAT SHE...



I DON'T WANT TO HEAR ABOUT HER! YOU'RE RUINING THE WHOLE EVENING FOR ME BY INSISTING ON DISCUSSING HER! SHE'S A HATEFUL WOMAN... HATEFUL!

I DON'T UNDERSTAND YOU AT ALL, MARGIE. SARA HAS SAID NOTHING BUT THE NICEST THINGS ABOUT YOU. YOU MUST BE WRONG ABOUT HER.

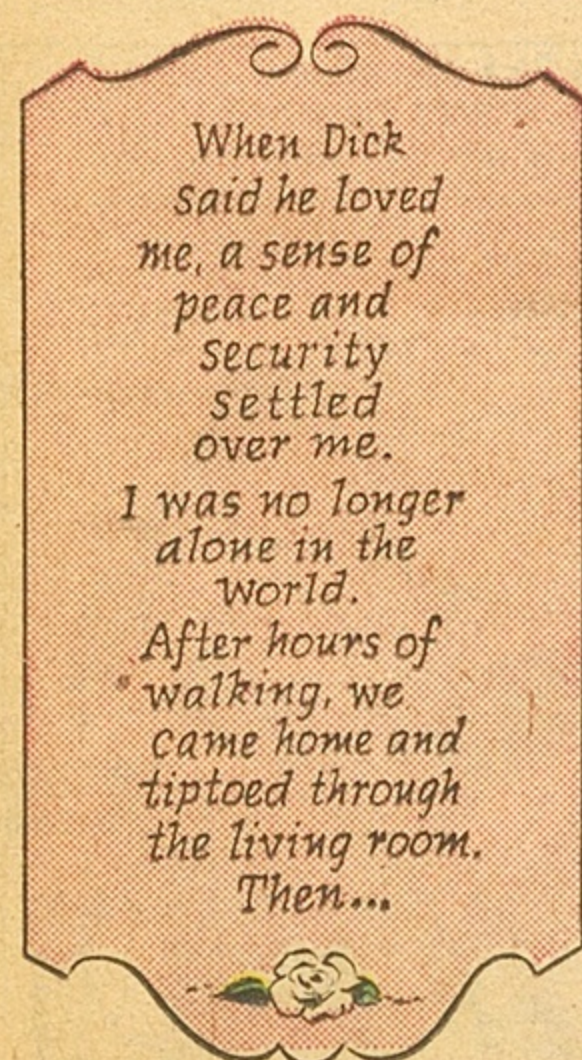
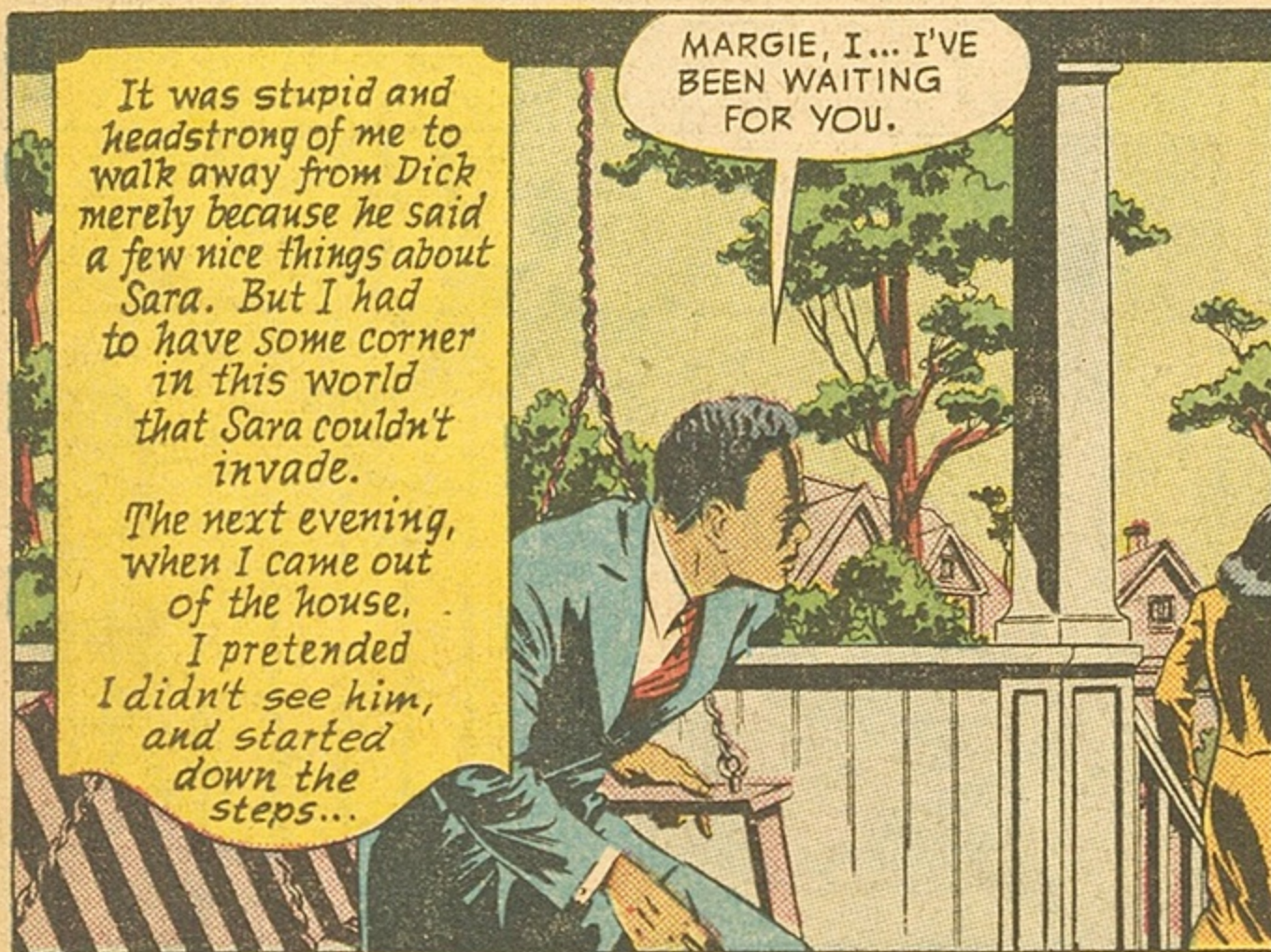


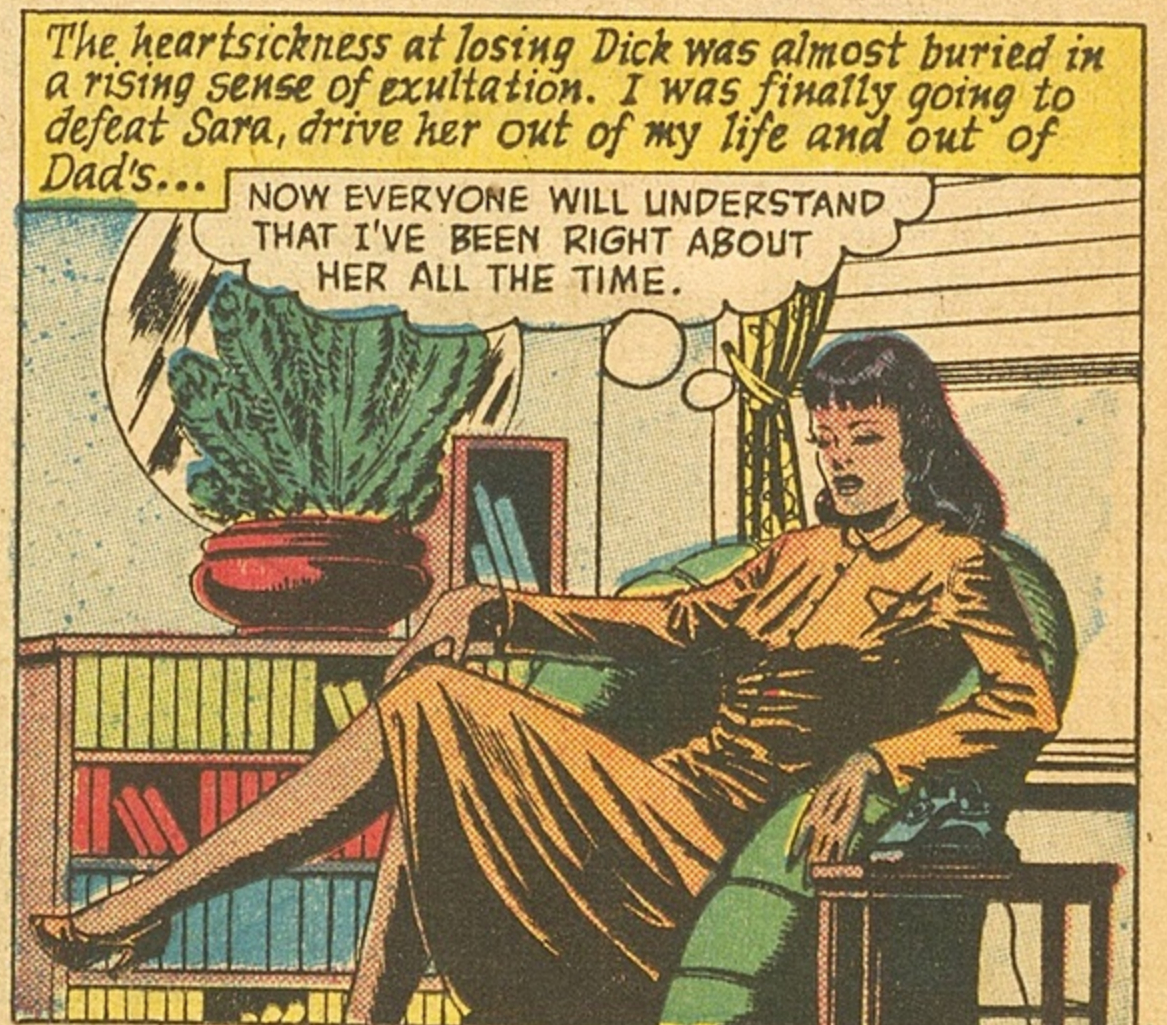
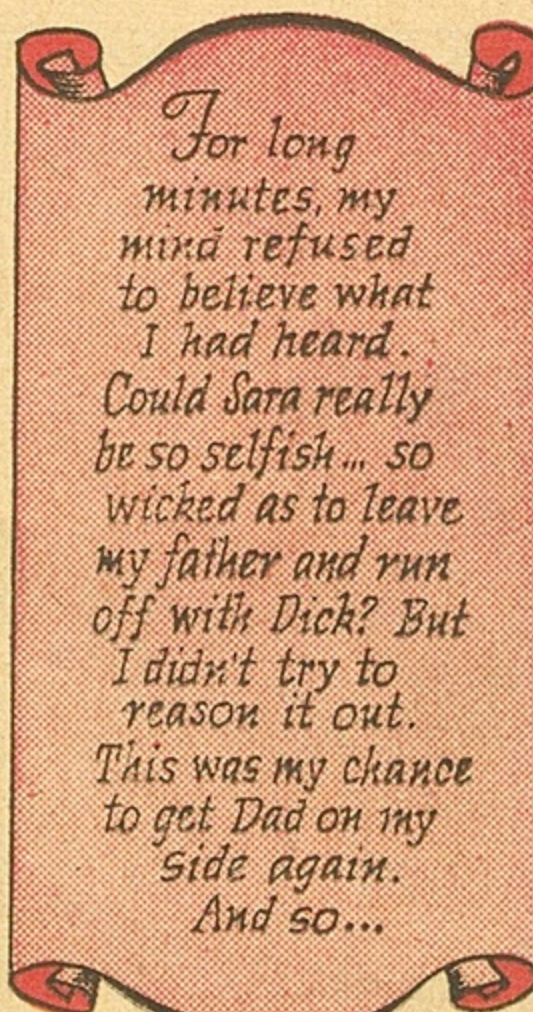
She had done it again! She had Dick on her side! She'd twisted him around her little finger just as she did everyone but me! Now she was robbing me of the very man I hoped would rescue me from her! Stunned, I walked away from him, my heart rebelling at every step...

OH, DICK... SOB... CALL ME BACK. I DON'T WANT TO LEAVE YOU ... SOB... CALL ME BACK!



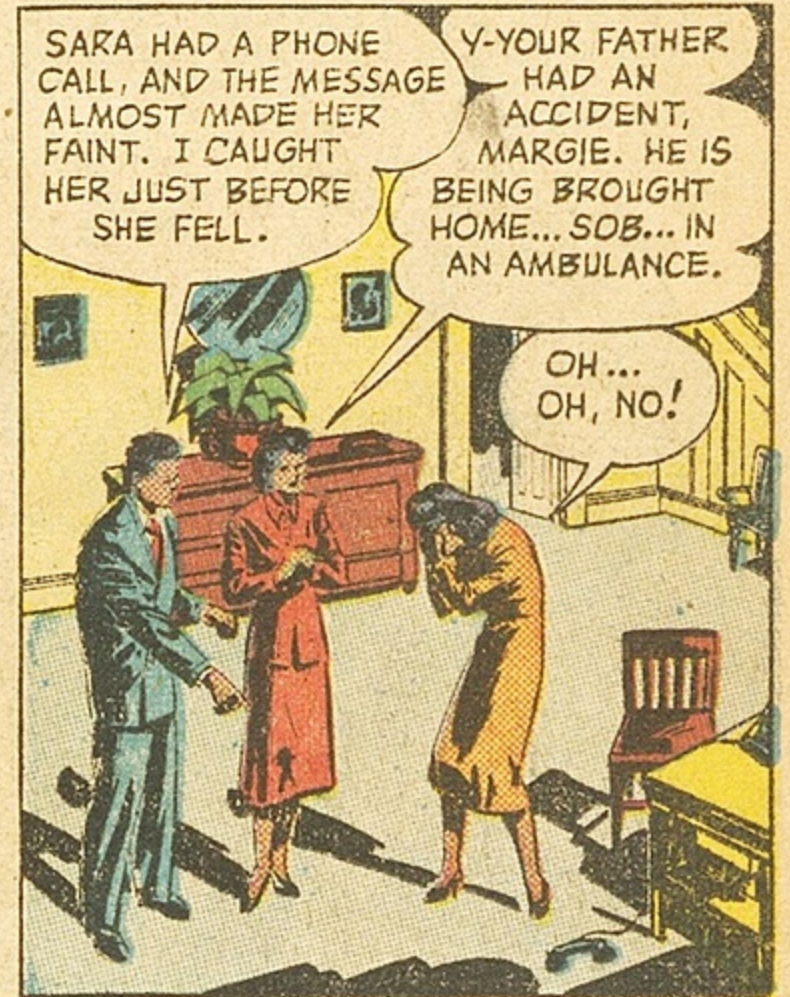
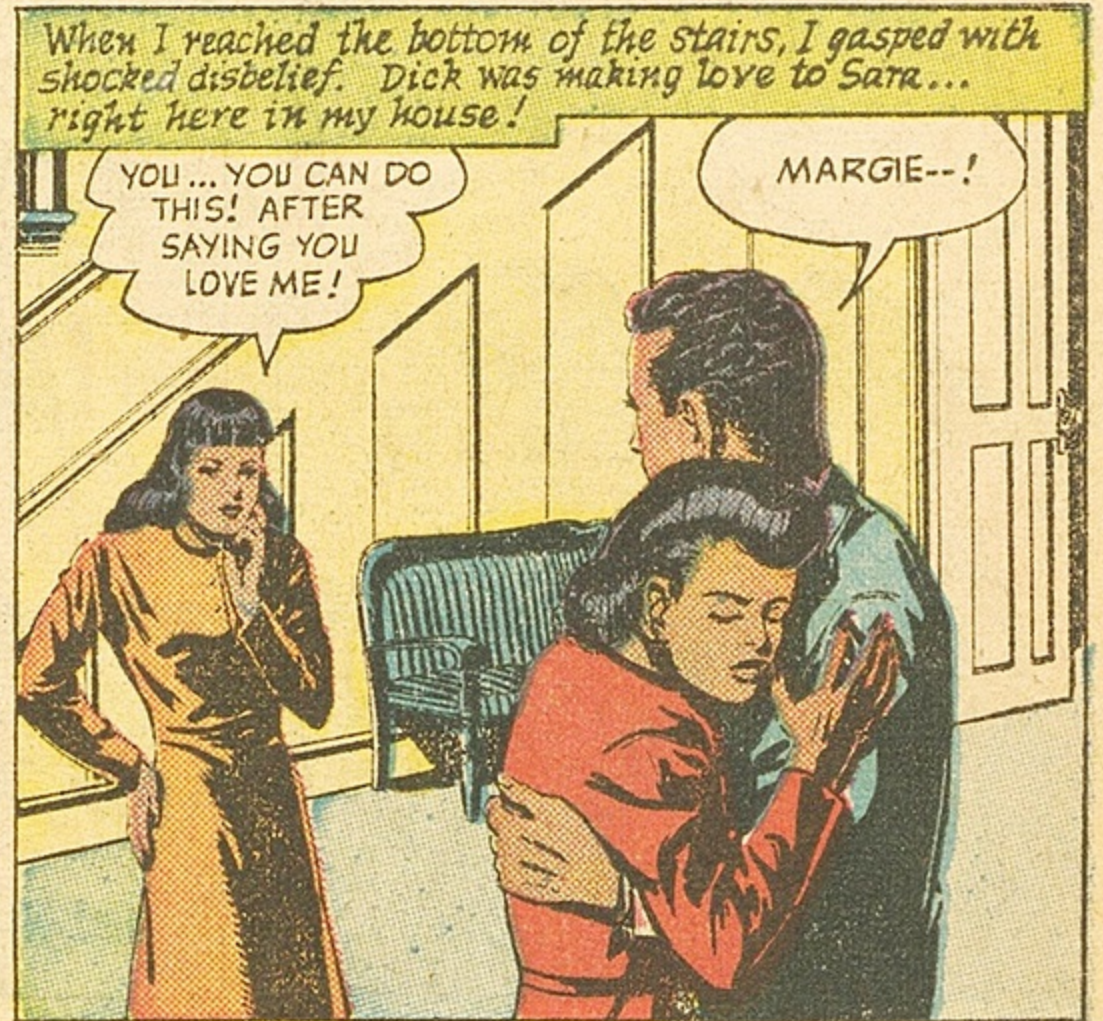
NEGRO ROMANCE





NEGRO ROMANCE

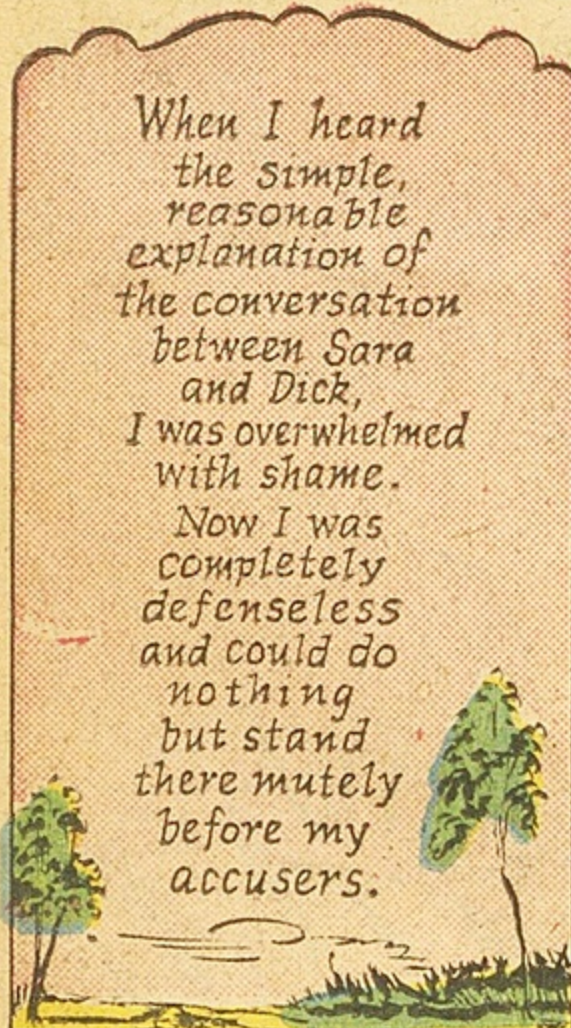
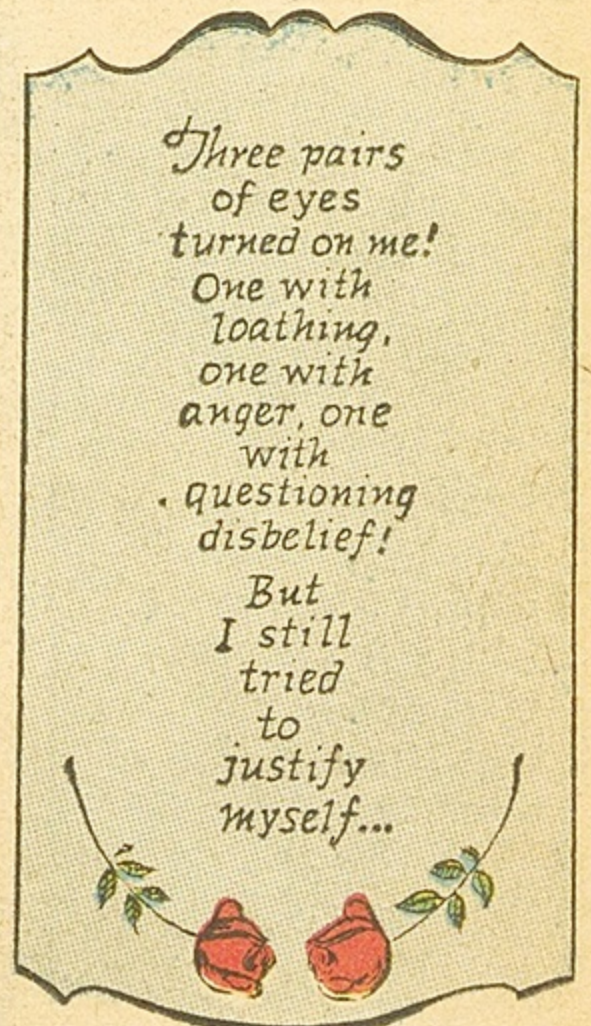
I went to my room to wait the agonizing minutes until Dad would return home to catch Sara and Dick! After what seemed an age, the phone rang and Sara answered it downstairs. I was afraid it was Dad and she would lie out of things... so I rushed down...



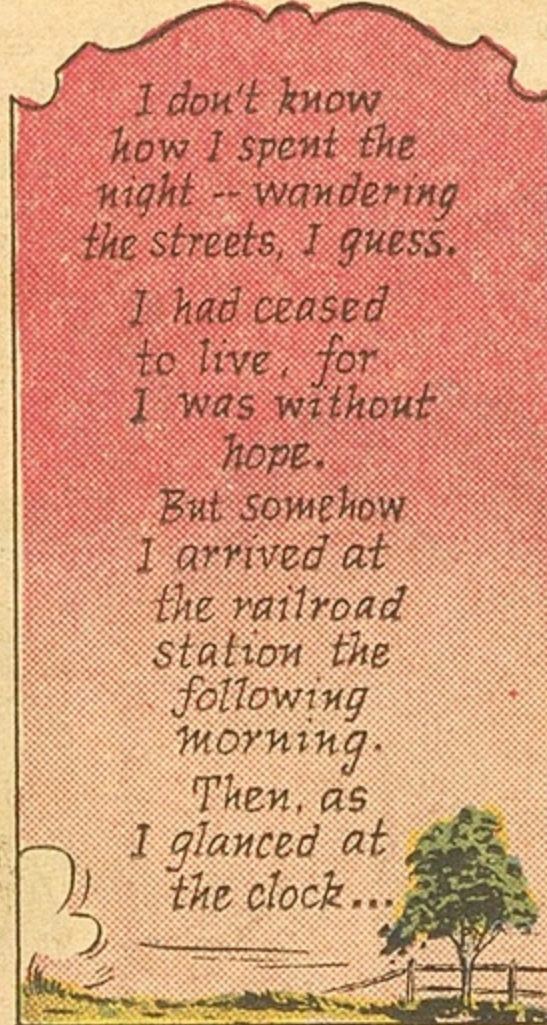
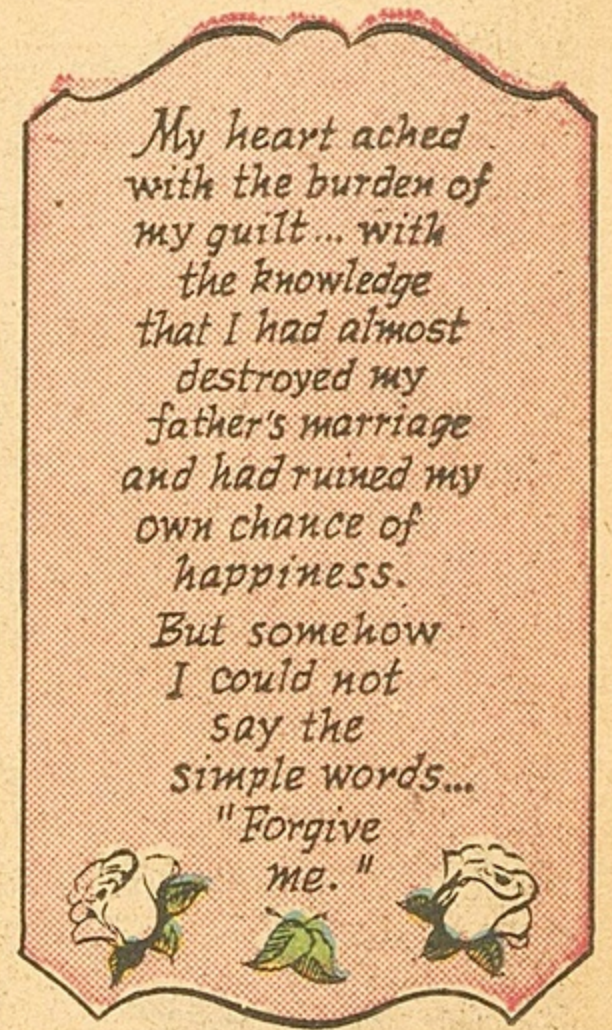
Rushing home in response to my call, Dad had failed to watch traffic and had been run down by a car. I had been responsible for his accident... and I had wrongly accused Dick of making love to Sara. I was a jealous, vindictive fool. The ambulance brought Daddy home, and after it left...



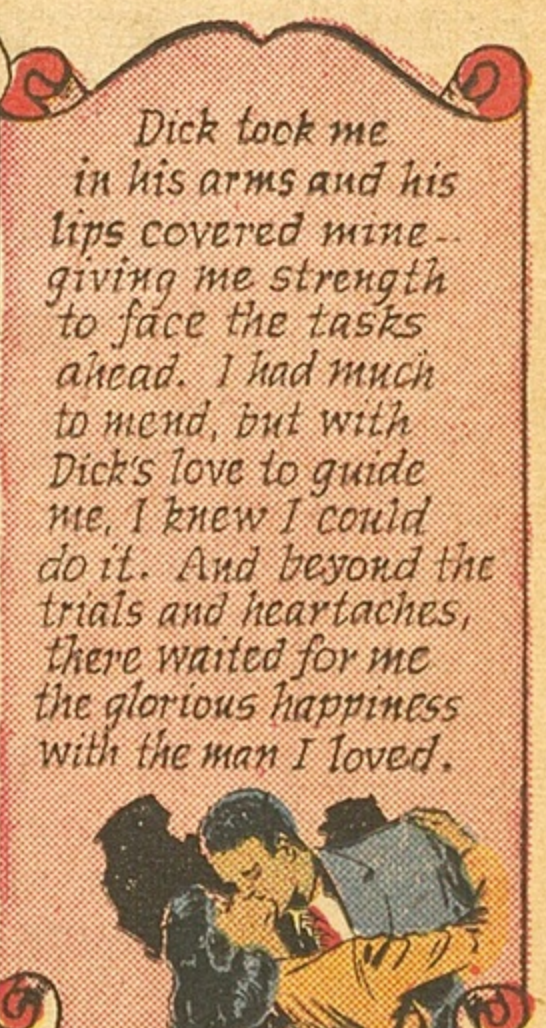
NEGRO ROMANCE



NEGRO ROMANCE

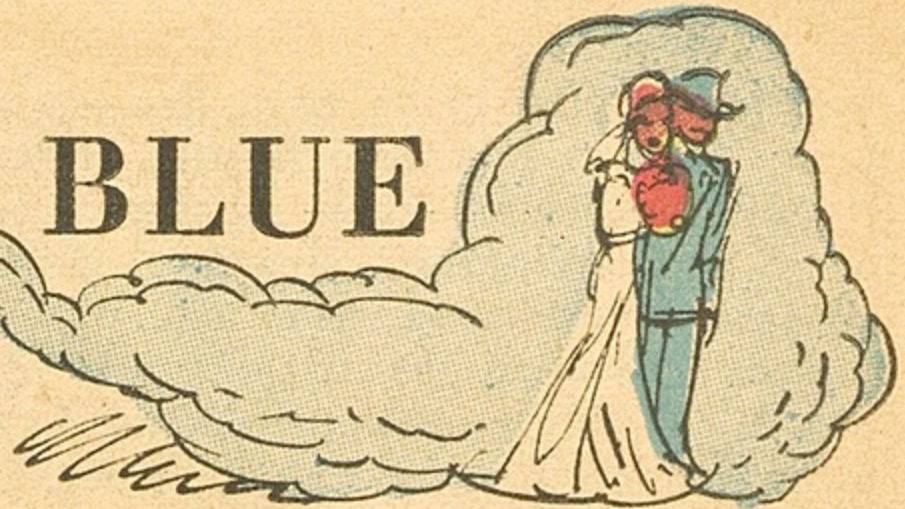


Remorse flooded through me, and I think it was only in that moment that I realized I was completely to blame for all that had happened -- that I was still to blame for trying to run away from a problem that was mine to face in the waiting room...





SOMETHING BLUE



By Olivia Harris

ANN knew she was a little fool! Crying wasn't going to help—or change a thing. Still the tears came, floods of them, making ragged little streaks down her cheeks as she burrowed deeper into the pillow. Her makeup would be ruined, and already her eyes were red and swollen. She looked a sight. And she didn't care! She didn't care about anything—not any more. John Riggs was marrying Sophia, that very afternoon! Ann's very own sister was marrying the man she loved, the only man she had ever loved, or ever would love.

She twisted on the bed, feeling the pillow hot and damp against her face. How could she face them downstairs? All the friends and relatives that had been invited to the wedding that afternoon. The wedding that would be starting now in half an hour.

"I can't," Ann sobbed. "I just can't go down there and watch it. And s-sing! They expect me to sing! When my heart is breaking . . ."

The door opened and Ann's sister came in. Sophia was tall with fine features and delicate bones. She was eight years older than Ann, who was nineteen.

For a moment Sophia stared, then came over to the bed and sat beside her younger sister. "Darling," she said, "what on earth?"

Ann hid her face in the pillow. No one, Sophia least of all, suspected that she loved John Riggs. How they would have laughed at her had they known! John was thirty-five and already a successful lawyer, and he thought of Ann as a child. How often in the past year had he laughed at her, ruffled her hair in a teasing fashion, and called her "Annie", a name he knew she hated. No one—least of all her sister—must know how she felt about John Riggs.

Sophia stroked Ann's hair. "You mustn't, darling. Everyone gets married at some time, or they should. And you're not losing me, you know. John and I aren't going off into the jungle or anything like that. We'll be living right here in the city, close to you. We'll see each other all the time. Why, it will be almost the same as before."

Ann sat up, staring at her sister with tear-stained eyes. So she thought that, did she? That Ann was crying because she was losing

a sister. Well, it was as good a way as any to explain the tears.

Sophia was talking again. "Mother and I have a problem, baby. We've suddenly discovered that I haven't anything blue."

"B-blue?"

Sophia patted her on the head again, then stood up. "Of course. You know the old saying—a bride must wear something old and something new, something borrowed and something blue. Well, I've got all the others, but not a thing that's blue. I never wear it, you know, because it doesn't suit me, and Mother hasn't anything either. So you'll have to help us out."

Ann went to her dressing table and started repairing the ravages of the tears, while Sophia rummaged in the closet. Finally, when Ann judged that she looked almost human again—just a little swelling around the eyes—she heard Sophia sigh in disgust.

"Not a thing," Sophia said. "Not a single blessed thing that I can wear—that's blue. What am I going to do?"

Ann had an idea. "Call up some of your friends, Sophia. There's still time to catch them before they start over here. Surely, one of the girls will have something you can borrow."

Sophia stooped and kissed her on the cheek. "Guess I'll have to do that. Now you hurry, mind. We haven't much time. And I certainly don't want to start off by keeping John waiting at his own wedding."

Half an hour later Ann went downstairs. Her heart felt like a lump of lead in her chest. And the first person she saw was John. He came toward her, tall and handsome, his white teeth flashing in a smile.

"Hi, Annie," he grinned. "Come to wish the old married man good luck?"

He put a hand on her arm and Ann felt a shiver start at her toes and go right to the top of her head. Why, oh why, couldn't this be her wedding? Why couldn't this be her man, her husband?

She looked away from John, not daring to let him see her eyes. "Y-you're not married yet, John."

He laughed, the ringing, hearty laugh of a happy man. "Not yet, but soon. We're just

NEGRO ROMANCE

waiting for the bride now. See—everyone is here. The band is all ready to start playing for the reception, soon as the ceremony is over. You're singing, remember. Hope you've rehearsed your song, kid."

Kid! Yes—that was all she was to him. A kid. A kid sister, now, pretty soon. Ann walked away and left him looking after her, a puzzled frown on his handsome face.

She went into the large dining room, that had been cleared and made ready for the reception. The orchestra, a five piece affair, was setting up chairs and music stands in one corner. The leader smiled at Ann.

"Hello, Miss Hardy. Looks like a nice wedding. And the boys and me have been rehearsing your song. We've got it down pat. A swell number, that *That's Why*."

Something tinkled in Ann's brain. "No," she said. "No. I've changed my mind. I'm not going to sing *That's Why*."

"But, Miss Hardy! We rehearsed it. And if we change now there won't be any time. We might mess things up and . . ."

Ann leaned close to him and whispered. After a moment the man smiled. "Well, I suppose it's okay if you say so. And we know *that* one, all right. Kind of a new idea, too."

Ann gave him her prettiest smile and went back into the living room. Last minute guests were arriving and things were in a bustle. Ann saw her mother coming down the stairs and went to meet her. Mrs. Hardy looked as though she also had been crying, but now she smiled at her youngest daughter.

"We found something, Ann. Something blue. But what a search we had! I finally located an old ribbon you used to wear in your hair. We made a little rosette and pinned it on Sophia's dress. It'll do the trick."

There was a little stir in the crowd. Sophia had appeared on the landing, tall and lovely in her flowing white dress. Mrs. Hardy dabbed at her eyes. "Isn't she the prettiest thing, Ann? And pretty soon now, I suppose I'll be losing you."

Sophia came down the stairs and John went to meet her. In the background the little orchestra began the soft strains of the *Wedding March*. A short little man came forward, a Bible clutched in his hands.

"Make me brave," Ann thought. "Don't let me cry now, not here. Let me get through this somehow. It won't be long. Just a few minutes."

It didn't take long. Then everyone was crowding around, congratulating and kissing the bride. Ann gave her sister a dutiful peck, slipped away from John's embrace and ran for the dining room and the orchestra. Now, she

thought! Now I'll say goodbye in my own way! I'll tell John what is in my heart in a way that only he will understand . . .

The orchestra leader looked at her. Ann nodded. The man tapped his foot three times and the music began to invade the room, stealing out into the corridor and inviting everyone to listen. People stopped talking and came to the door of the dining room, silent now, listening, watching the frail girl with the luminous tear-dimmed eyes.

Ann sang: "*When you walk down the aisle, I may wear a smile. Yet there'll be no disguise for the tears in my eyes.*"

Ann was alone in the house. She closed her eyes and sang, knowing it was her heart that sang, that her lips were only doing her heart's bidding. Her voice, throaty and rich, dipped and swooped and climbed. Every note was pure gold. All the exquisite agony of an unrequited love rose from the depths of her being as, unashamed, she sang her love story that was ending before it ever began.

The tones died away. Ann opened her eyes to applause. People called out, clapped and stamped. Ann did not heed. She looked into the eyes of her sister. Tears still sparkled in her own eyes, but only she knew that now they were different tears.

Ann said, "There, Sophia, is your something blue. And darling, oh, Sophia, be happy!"

She left them together then, holding hands, and went out onto the porch. A westing sun was casting purple shadows and birds twittered happily in the shrubbery surrounding the house. Ann smiled. She was all right now. Somehow that song had taken her burden with it. Already she saw things differently. Life was long and she was very young. There would be another man, one day . . .

"Miss Hardy, please?"

SHE turned to see the young man standing there. A good looking young man. He was smiling. "I'm Hal Marks," he said. "I was invited by John. And I heard you sing. You were magnificent. Will you sing with my band, Miss Hardy? With your mother's permission, of course. And I'm sorry if I seem to rush things, but we're leaving for Hollywood next week to play a picture engagement and I want to start rehearsing you . . ."

Ann nodded. "I think Mother will say yes, Mr. Marks."

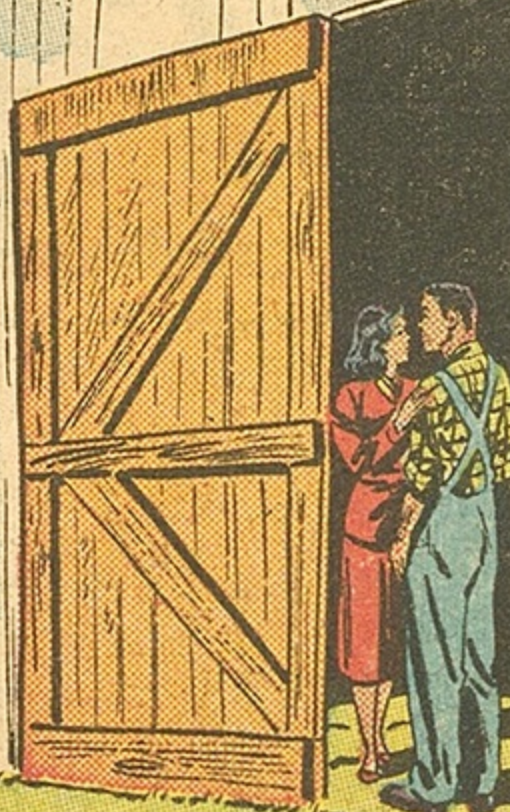
They went in together and as Ann linked her arm in that of the young man, she wondered vaguely, what had happened to the little girl that had been weeping. It was funny how fast you grew up.

THE END

SPIRIT!

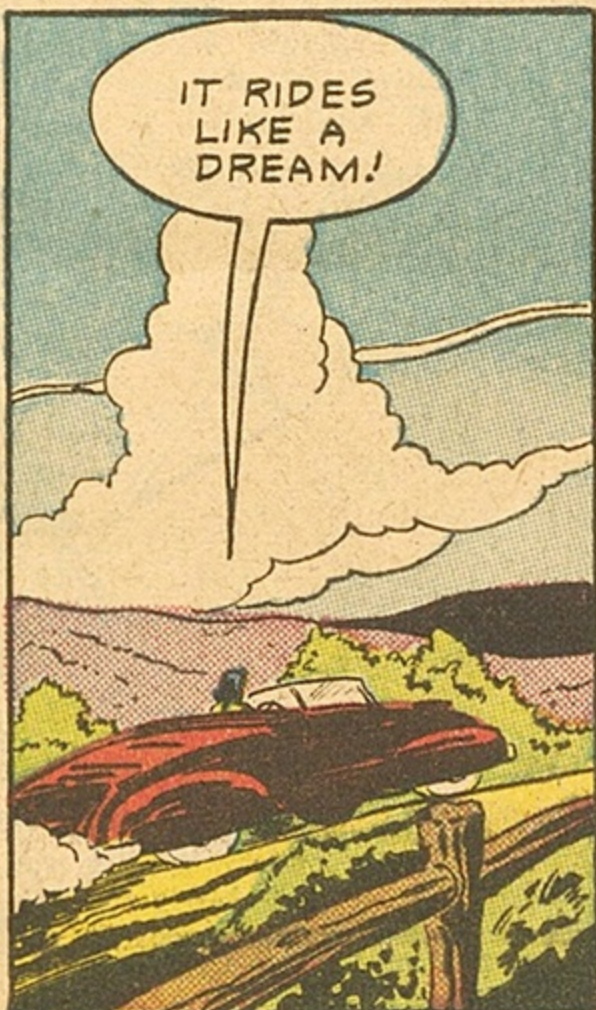
SO THAT'S HOW IT IS!
AND ALL THE TIME I
THOUGHT HE LOVED
ME! WELL--HE'S
NOT GETTING AWAY
WITH IT!

THERE WAS IN BART'S
BOLDLY HANDSOME FACE,
AND IN HIS GREAT MUS-
CULAR BROADNESS---
THE STRENGTH AND
SWEETNESS OF THE
EARTH HE TILLED AND
LABORED UPON.
NORMA'S EMOTIONS
SOARED AT THE MOMENT
OF THEIR FIRST
MEETING; FOR IN HIS
EYES WAS
THE GLOWING BELIEF
THAT THIS TRYST WAS
FATE-CONTRIVED!
YET WHAT WAS THE
NATURE OF THIS
FOLLY IN HER HEART
THAT REJECTED
SO GREAT A LOVE?



YEAR
AFTER
YEAR WE
LIVE IN OUR
COMFORTABLE
RUTS,
WAITING
FOR THE
EXPLOSION
THAT WILL
DRIVE US
OUT OF THE
COMMON-
PLACE.
FOR ME, IT
CAME THE
DAY I
STARTED
ON MY
VACATION IN
THE NEW
CAR FATHER
HAD GIVEN
ME

IT RIDES
LIKE A
DREAM!



SERENELY COASTING
ALONG, ABSORBED IN
THE BEAUTY OF THE COUN-
TRYSIDE, I REACTED TOO
SLOWLY TO THREATENING
DISASTER!

LOOK
OUT!



CRASH!



THERE WAS A STUNNING IMPACT, AND THEN A CURTAIN OF NUMBING DARKNESS. DAZEDLY, I FELT MYSELF BEING LIFTED GENTLY FROM BEHIND THE WHEEL....



EASY, BART! THERE COULD BE SOME BROKEN BONES! BRING HER OVER HERE!

OKAY, DOC. THANK HEAVENS YOU WERE WITH ME!

CRADLED IN STRONG ARMS THAT CARRIED ME FROM THE WRECKAGE, I OPENED MY EYES UPON A MASCULINELY HANDSOME FACE, MARKED WITH DEEP LINES OF CONCERN....

SHE'S COMING AROUND, DOC. HOW --HOW IS SHE?

I CAN'T FIND A THING WRONG WITH HER. SHE'S JUST REACTING TO SHOCK. GET HER UP ON HER FEET!



HOW DO YOU FEEL?

MY CAR! IT... IT'S RUINED!

YOU RECKLESS FOOL! SEE WHAT YOU'VE DONE TO MY NEW CAR! YOU'LL PAY FOR IT--- YOU'LL PAY EVERY NICKEL! WHAT KIND OF DRIVER ARE YOU, ANYWAY?



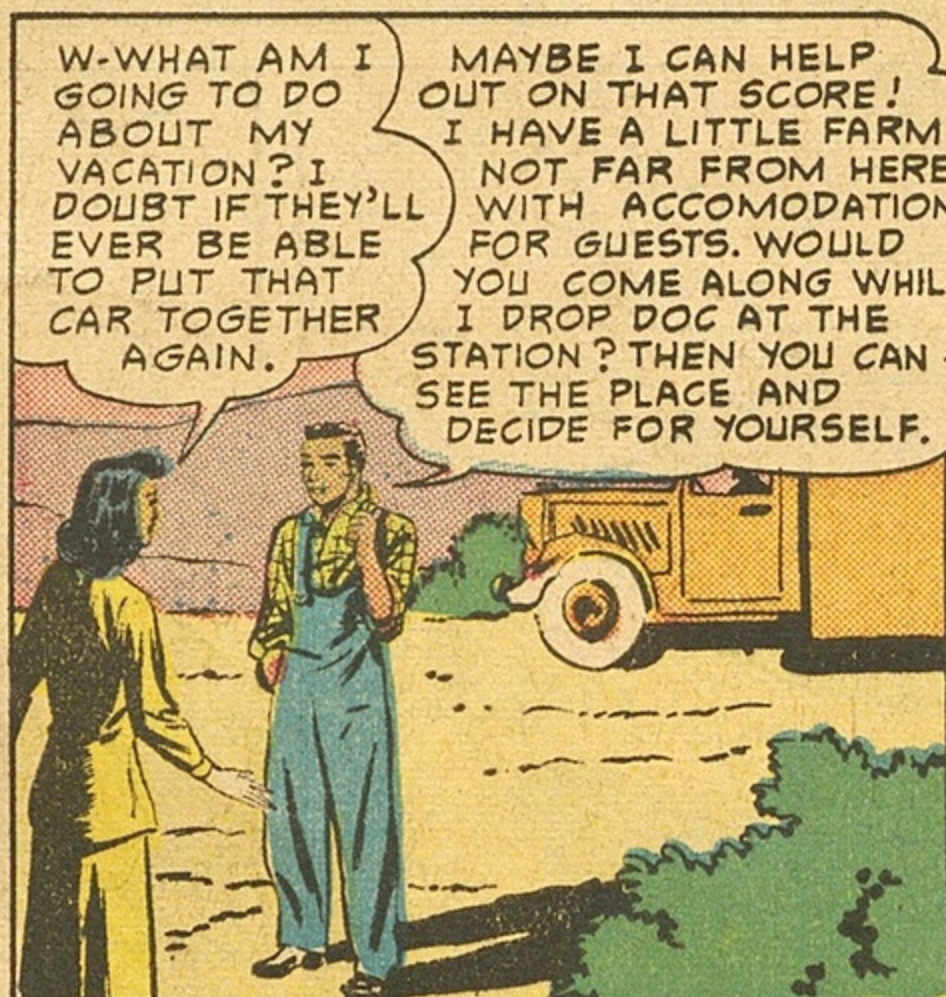
I... I'M TERRIBLY SORRY. I WAS RUSHING DR. WRIGHT HERE TO THE STATION TO CATCH A TRAIN. THERE'S AN EMERGENCY CASE WAITING FOR HIM.

I'M GLAD IT WAS ONLY THE CAR THAT SUSTAINED THE DAMAGE. MY INSURANCE WILL COVER ANY DAMAGES.

WELL-L-L... AS LONG AS YOU'RE INSURED. I DON'T SUPPOSE YOU DID IT ON PURPOSE!



HIS APOLOGETIC MANNER CALMED ME SOMEWHAT, AND THE CAR WAS FORGOTTEN FOR A MOMENT. I WAS AWARE OF HIS APPRAISING GLANCE AND THE CONCEALED ADMIRATION IN HIS EYES. THE WARMTH RUSHED TO MY CHEEKS....



W-WHAT AM I GOING TO DO ABOUT MY VACATION? I DOUBT IF THEY'LL EVER BE ABLE TO PUT THAT CAR TOGETHER AGAIN.

MAYBE I CAN HELP OUT ON THAT SCORE! I HAVE A LITTLE FARM NOT FAR FROM HERE WITH ACCOMODATIONS FOR GUESTS. WOULD YOU COME ALONG WHILE I DROP DOC AT THE STATION? THEN YOU CAN SEE THE PLACE AND DECIDE FOR YOURSELF.



I...I GUESS THERE ISN'T MUCH ELSE I CAN DO AT THE MOMENT.

THAT'S SWELL! WHILE IN TOWN, I CAN MAKE ARRANGEMENTS TO HAVE YOUR CAR TOWED AWAY. I SURE WISH YOU LIKE MY PLACE. WE'VE NEVER HAD SO PRETTY A GUEST!

IT WAS A SMALL FARM AND HAD OBVIOUSLY SEEN BETTER DAYS. BUT THERE WAS AN APPEALING AIR OF TRANQUILITY ABOUT THE PLACE... AND WITH THE PRESENCE OF BART, I DIDN'T HESITATE VERY LONG IN MAKING UP MY MIND TO REMAIN. IN THE DAYS THAT FOLLOWED, A CERTAIN TALL AND HANDSOME FARMER WAS THE PREOCCUPATION OF ALL MY DAYDREAMS...

HE'S ONLY A FARMER... AND NOT VERY PROSPEROUS EITHER. AND YET, EVERY TIME HE TALKS TO ME-- OR LOOKS AT ME, I FEEL LIKE A FLUSTERED, STAMMERING SCHOOL-GIRL! NEVERTHELESS, I MUSTN'T FORGET, HE STILL OWES ME THE PRICE OF A NEW CAR!



FOR A SMALL FARM, THIS PLACE TAKES UP A LOT OF YOUR TIME. DON'T YOU EVER DO ANYTHING BUT WORK, BART?

WELL--THE PLACE NEEDS A LOT OF IT. BUT DISCIPLINING MYSELF IS GETTING TO BE VERY TOUGH. YOU'RE A VERY DISTRACTING INFLUENCE!



I'M ALMOST AFRAID TO ASK YOU THIS, NORMA--- BUT NOW THAT YOU'VE BEEN HERE FOR A WHILE, DO YOU INTEND TO STAY FOR THE REST OF YOUR VACATION?

HE REALLY WANTS ME TO STAY!

YES--I'VE DECIDED TO STAY! IT'S REALLY A LOVELY LITTLE PLACE.

FROM NOW ON, IT'S PARADISE! OF COURSE, YOU'LL STAY AS MY GUEST! IT'S THE LEAST I CAN DO AFTER WRECKING YOUR CAR.

WHY AREN'T YOU DOWN AT THE LAKE WITH THE OTHER GUESTS? IT'S TOO WARM AROUND HERE THIS TIME OF DAY.

I'VE BEEN WAITING FOR MY HOST TO INVITE ME!



SHORTLY AFTER, WE WERE SKIMMING ALONG THE QUIET WATERS OF THE LAKE. THE DROWSY SUMMER AFTERNOON WAS A SHARP CONTRAST TO THE TURBULENT EMOTIONS AROUSED BY HIS NEARNESS...

DO YOU BELIEVE IN FATE ARRANGING THESE THINGS, NORMA? I MEAN, LIKE THE AUTO WRECK. JUST A FEW DAYS AGO I NEVER HAD SEEN YOU BEFORE, AND NOW, I FIND THAT TIME HAS TAKEN ON A NEW MEANING. I HOPE WE'RE GOING TO SEE A LOT OF EACH OTHER!

I THINK I'D LIKE THAT, BART...



IF THERE WERE WORDS TO DESCRIBE THIS WORLD-- APART THAT WE ALONE INHABITED IN THE ENRaptured DAYS THAT FOLLOWED--- WE WERE FAR TOO OCCUPIED WITH EACH OTHER TO THINK OF THEM. LOVE HAD OPENED ITS GATE OF ENCHANTMENT AND BADE US ENTER.....



NEGRO ROMANCE

TIME HAD LOST ALL MEANING FOR ME. THE PASSING HOURS WERE MEASURED BY MY MOMENTS WITH BART

I BEGAN TO RESENT THE EXACTING DEMANDS THE FARM MADE ON HIM. THEN, ONE NIGHT, WITH THE MOON SHINING UPON US....

OH-- ISN'T IT BEAUTIFUL! IT MAKES EVERYTHING SEEM SO BRIGHT AND GLOWINGLY ALIVE!

THAT'S HOW EVERYTHING SEEMS SINCE YOU CAME, NORMA!



SUDDENLY I WAS IN HIS ARMS, AND MY LIPS YIELDED TO HIS. I LOST MYSELF IN A NEW, SWEET, TINGLING ECSTASY....



I LOVE YOU, NORMA! SO VERY MUCH!

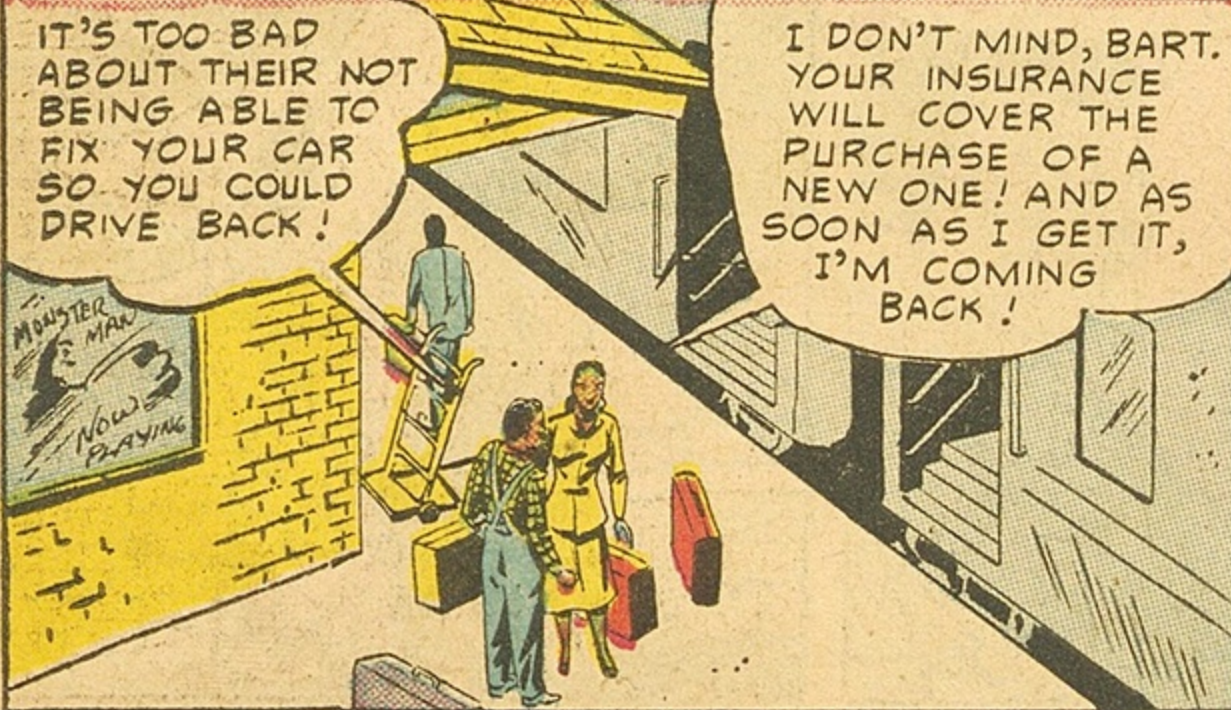
HOLD ME TIGHT...MY DEAREST!



WITH THIS AVOWAL OF OUR LOVE, A VISTA OF INFINITE HAPPINESS OPENED UP BEFORE ME... AT LONG LAST, MY VACATION WAS OVER, AND I RELUCTANTLY FOUND MYSELF AT THE STATION, WAITING FOR THE TRAIN THAT WOULD CARRY ME FROM MY NEWLY-DISCOVERED PARADISE...

IT'S TOO BAD ABOUT THEIR NOT BEING ABLE TO FIX YOUR CAR SO YOU COULD DRIVE BACK!

I DON'T MIND, BART. YOUR INSURANCE WILL COVER THE PURCHASE OF A NEW ONE! AND AS SOON AS I GET IT, I'M COMING BACK!



GOODBYE, DEAR. DON'T FORGET TO WRITE!

I'LL BE SEEING YOU... SOON!



IN THE DAYS THAT FOLLOWED, I CARRIED MEMORIES OF BART WITH ME WHEREVER I WENT. THEN, ONE AFTERNOON I STOPPED AT THE INSURANCE OFFICE IN REFERENCE TO MY CLAIM....

YES, MR. BART HADLEY DID CARRY INSURANCE WITH US, BUT IT HAS LAPSED. THERE'S A NOTATION HERE TO WRITE HIM ABOUT IT. I'M SORRY, BUT WE CAN'T DO A THING FOR YOU.

THEN--THEN HE HAS NO INSURANCE AT ALL!?



HE-- HE HOODWINKED ME-- MADE A FOOL OF ME. HE MUST'VE KNOWN ABOUT THE INSURANCE, SO HE PRETENDED TO FALL IN LOVE WITH ME! I GUESS HE THOUGHT HIS KISSES WOULD MAKE ME FORGET ALL ABOUT MY WRECKED CAR. WELL-- HE'S NOT GETTING AWAY WITH IT!



THE TOUCH OF BART'S CONSOLING HAND MADE ME WHIRL HOPEFULLY TOWARD HIM, AND I POISED MY LIPS FOR THE KISS OF RECONCILIATION. I COULD RECEIVE HIS LIPS, I THOUGHT, NOW THAT I WAS SURE HE WASN'T IN A POSITION TO DECEIVE ME!

I DO LOVE YOU, NORMA!

OH... MY DARLING!

WITH THE LIEN IN HAND, I WAS ABLE TO DISCARD MY SUSPICIONS AND LOOK FORWARD TO THE REPEATED TRIPS UP TO THE FARM FOR WEEK ENDS. AS THE SUMMER WANED, OUR LOVE SEEMED TO GROW STRONGER. THEN, ONE DAY, I HAD A VISITOR AT MY HOUSE....

THERE'S A LADY OUTSIDE ASKING TO SEE YOU, NORMA.

SEE ME? WHO IS SHE?

I'M MRS. JOHN PECK. MY HUSBAND RUNS THE MORTGAGE AND LOAN COMPANY WHICH HAS ISSUED THE LIEN AGAINST BART HADLEY'S PROPERTY. I CAME HERE PREPARED TO PAY YOU TWO THOUSAND DOLLARS FOR THE LIEN! YOU I WANT TO RETURN IT TO HIM!

...YOU'LL BUY BART'S LIEN?

YOU MUST HAVE A VERY SPECIAL INTEREST IN BART TO DO THIS! HE SENT YOU HERE, DIDN'T HE? HOW DID HE CONVINCE YOU TO MAKE SO MAGNANIMOUS A GESTURE? HE'S AWFULLY GOOD AT IT, ISN'T HE?

I DON'T THINK THAT'S IMPORTANT! WHAT IS IMPORTANT IS THE MONEY I HAVE HERE TO COVER THE LIEN. WILL YOU ASSIGN IT TO ME?

SUSPICION... NEVER COMPLETELY ELIMINATED IN MY MIND... REARED ITS UGLY HEAD! I THOUGHT IT WAS PRETTY OBVIOUS. MY ORIGINAL ACCUSATION WAS RIGHT! BART HAD ONLY BEEN USING MEANINGLESS WORDS OF LOVE UNTIL HE COULD CHARM SOMEBODY INTO BUYING UP THE LIEN FOR HIM. EVIDENTLY THIS WOMAN WAS HIS LATEST CONQUEST....

WILL I SELL IT? **NO! NEVER!** YOU CAN TELL HIM I'M USING THE LIEN TO TAKE OVER HIS PROPERTY! YES--IT'LL BE **MINE--ALL MINE!**

EVIDENTLY, YOU'RE NOT IN A RATIONAL MOOD TO DISCUSS THIS. I'LL LEAVE MY CARD IN CASE YOU CHANGE YOUR MIND! GOOD DAY!

THERE WAS A LOOK OF DRAB DESERTION ABOUT THE FARM WHEN I ARRIVED SEVERAL DAYS LATER. I HAD PUT IN A CLAIM ON THE PLACE. WHEN I CONFRONTED BART.....

THEY TOLD ME WHAT YOU HAD DONE, BUT I HAD TO WAIT AND SEE IT WITH MY OWN EYES!

I SUPPOSE YOU FOUND OUR ROMANTIC INTERLUDE VERY AMUSING. BUT WHAT MADE YOU THINK I'D CALMLY STEP ASIDE WHILE YOU SENT YOUR NEWEST CONQUEST TO BUY THE LIEN FROM ME.

JUST WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?

I WASN'T BORN YESTERDAY, MR. HADLEY. NOBODY CAN MAKE A FOOL OF ME AND GET AWAY WITH IT!

SEETHING WITH INDIGNATION, I TOOK THE NEXT TRAIN UP TO THE FARM, AND BART'S HAPPY EXCLAMATION ALMOST MADE ME FORGET MY MISSION. HE HAD FOOLED ME ONCE AND I WAS DETERMINED THAT WOULD NOT HAPPEN AGAIN!

NORMA! WHY--WHY DIDN'T YOU TELL ME YOU WERE COMING? I...I WOULD HAVE MET YOU AND...AND...! GEE! IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU!

I THINK YOU'RE OVER DOING THIS, BART! YOU SEE, I ALREADY KNOW THAT YOU HAVE NO CAR INSURANCE. THEY WOULDN'T HONOR MY CLAIM.



NO INSURANCE--!? OH--I--I THOUGHT IT --IT WAS STILL IN FORCE. YOU DO BELIEVE THAT, DON'T YOU, NORMA?

I BELIEVE WHAT I SEE! I'D LIKE TO KNOW WHAT YOU'RE GOING TO DO ABOUT MAKING GOOD THE LOSS OF MY CAR.



THEN YOU THINK THAT ALL I SAID TO YOU--EVERY-TIME OUR LIPS MET--- I WAS JUST TRYING TO DO YOU OUT OF THAT MONEY! I--I CAN'T BELIEVE IT!

YOU OWE ME TWO THOUSAND DOLLARS---AND I WANT IT!

BART STARED AT ME SILENTLY, FOR A LONG MOMENT. HIS FACE REVEALED THE FLEETING DOUBTS THAT ASSAILED HIM. THEN, HE TURNED ON HIS HEEL AND STRODE AWAY. HE LEFT FOR THE CITY IMMEDIATELY AFTERWARDS. THE NEXT MORNING...

HERE, NORMA. I THINK THIS SHOULD COVER THE DEBT I OWE YOU, UNTIL I RAISE THE CASH!

WHAT IS IT?



THERE WAS AN ALIEN COLDNESS IN HIS EYES---EYES THAT I HAD ONLY KNOWN TO BE GLOWING WITH TENDERNESS AND DEEP AFFECTION. SUDDENLY, I WANTED HIS ARMS AROUND ME AGAIN, AND THE REASSURANCE OF A LOVE I HAD DOUBTED....

IT'S A LIEN ON MY FARM. I DON'T HAVE TO TELL YOU WHAT THIS PLACE MEANS TO ME--! IT'S ALL I HAVE LEFT! THAT PAPER GIVES YOU THE RIGHT TO TAKE MY FARM. IT'LL MORE THAN COVER THE COST OF YOUR CAR.

I...I DIDN'T MEAN...

LET'S NOT EVEN DISCUSS IT, NORMA! I WANT YOU TO HAVE IT! AFTER ALL, I DO OWE YOU SOME MONEY. YOU'RE ENTITLED TO SOME COLLATERAL!



PERHAPS YOU HAD A RIGHT TO BE SUSPICIOUS! BUT I THOUGHT OUR LOVE WOULD HAVE GIVEN YOU FAITH IN ME.

PLEASE, BART...TRY TO FORGET THIS HAPPENED! I CAN'T BEAR YOUR FEELING THIS WAY TOWARD ME!



I HAD EXPECTED AN ANGERED RETORT THAT WOULD AMOUNT TO AN OPEN CONFESSION. WHAT I WAS CONVINCED WAS AN ACT OF FEIGNED INNOCENCE ONLY INFURIATED ME.....

DON'T PRETEND! I'M NOT GOING TO BE TAKEN IN BY YOUR LIES ANYMORE. YOU KNOW VERY WELL WHICH WOMAN--! **MRS. JOHN PECK!** THAT'S WHO! I SUPPOSE YOU GAVE HER THE SAME LINE YOU GAVE ME! BUT IT DIDN'T WORK! **I OWN THE FARM NOW!**

MRS. JOHN.. PECK? THEN-- THEN--IT WAS IRMA! SHE'S--BACK!

I UNDERSTAND NOW. YES--MRS. PECK IS AN OLD FRIEND OF MINE. BUT I HAD NO IDEA WHAT SHE WAS UP TO. BUT IF NOTHING ELSE, WHAT SHE DID, GAVE ME AN INSIGHT INTO THE GIRL I THOUGHT I LOVED!



ONCE BEFORE, OUR LOVE WAS TESTED, AND YOU FOUND IT WANTING. I SHOULDN'T BE SURPRISED YOU'D DO THIS! KEEP THE PLACE. IT HAS NO MEANING FOR ME ANYMORE.

HE---HE'S TRYING TO BRAZEN IT OUT. BUT HE DOESN'T FOOL ME FOR A MINUTE!

I TRIED TO FIGHT OFF THE FEELING OF ACHING DESPAIR IN THE DAYS THAT FOLLOWED BART'S LEAVING. AGAIN AND AGAIN, I'D FIND MYSELF DRAWN TO THE DESERTED FARM WHICH HAD ONCE BEEN THE SCENE OF SO MANY TENDER MEMORIES. THEN, IN EXASPERATION --AS IF TO CUT OUT THE LONGING FOR BART WITHIN ME, I DECIDED TO SELL THE PLACE..

IF YOU'RE SURE YOU MADE UP YOUR MIND ABOUT DISPOSING OF THE FARM, WE'LL PUT IT UP FOR AUCTION. YOU SHOULD REALIZE A GREAT DEAL MORE THAN THE TWO THOUSAND DOLLARS ORIGINALLY OWED YOU.

MY MIND IS MADE UP!



JOHN PECK

OH--IT'S YOU! JOHN--I DON'T LIKE TO INTERFERE IN YOUR BUSINESS, BUT WOULD YOU EXCUSE US FOR A FEW MINUTES. I'D APPRECIATE IF I COULD TALK TO THIS YOUNG LADY--ALONE.

ALL RIGHT, DEAR. BUT HER MIND IS OBVIOUSLY MADE UP.

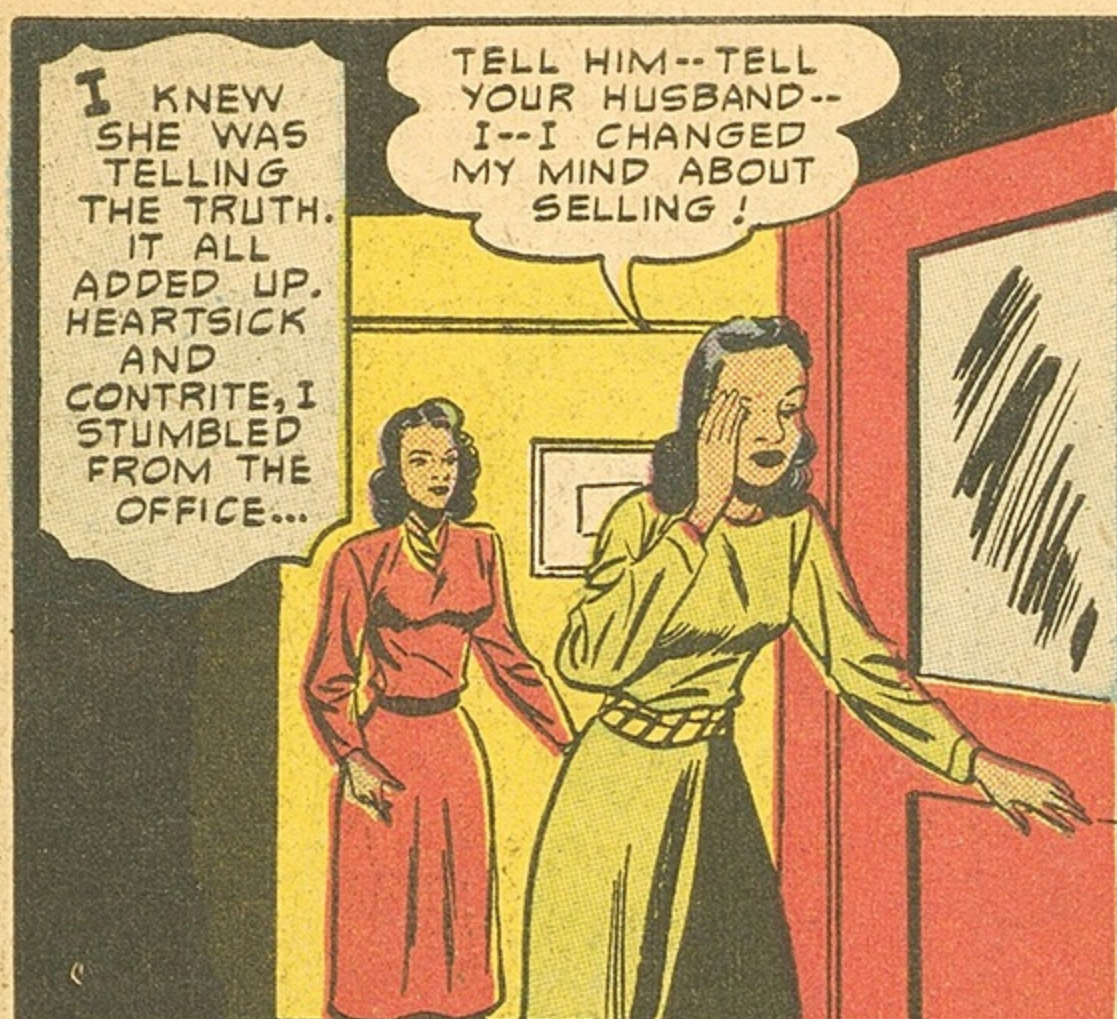
YOU CAN SAVE YOUR BREATH. IT DIDN'T DO HIM ANY GOOD WHEN HE SENT YOU LAST TIME --AND IT WON'T HELP NOW! BESIDES, THIS ISN'T YOUR AFFAIR!

IN A WAY IT IS! YOU SEE, BART NEVER SENT ME. IT WAS MY OWN IDEA. I SUPPOSE I SHOULD START AT THE BEGINNING.

BART AND I WERE ENGAGED BEFORE I MET AND MARRIED MR. PECK. HE TOOK IT PRETTY HARD, AND LET HIS FARM RUN DOWN BADLY. WHEN I RETURNED FROM A TRIP, MY HUSBAND TOLD ME ABOUT THE LIEN. I'M FINANCIALLY WELL OFF, AND MY GUILTY CONSCIENCE PROMPTED ME TO HELP HIM.

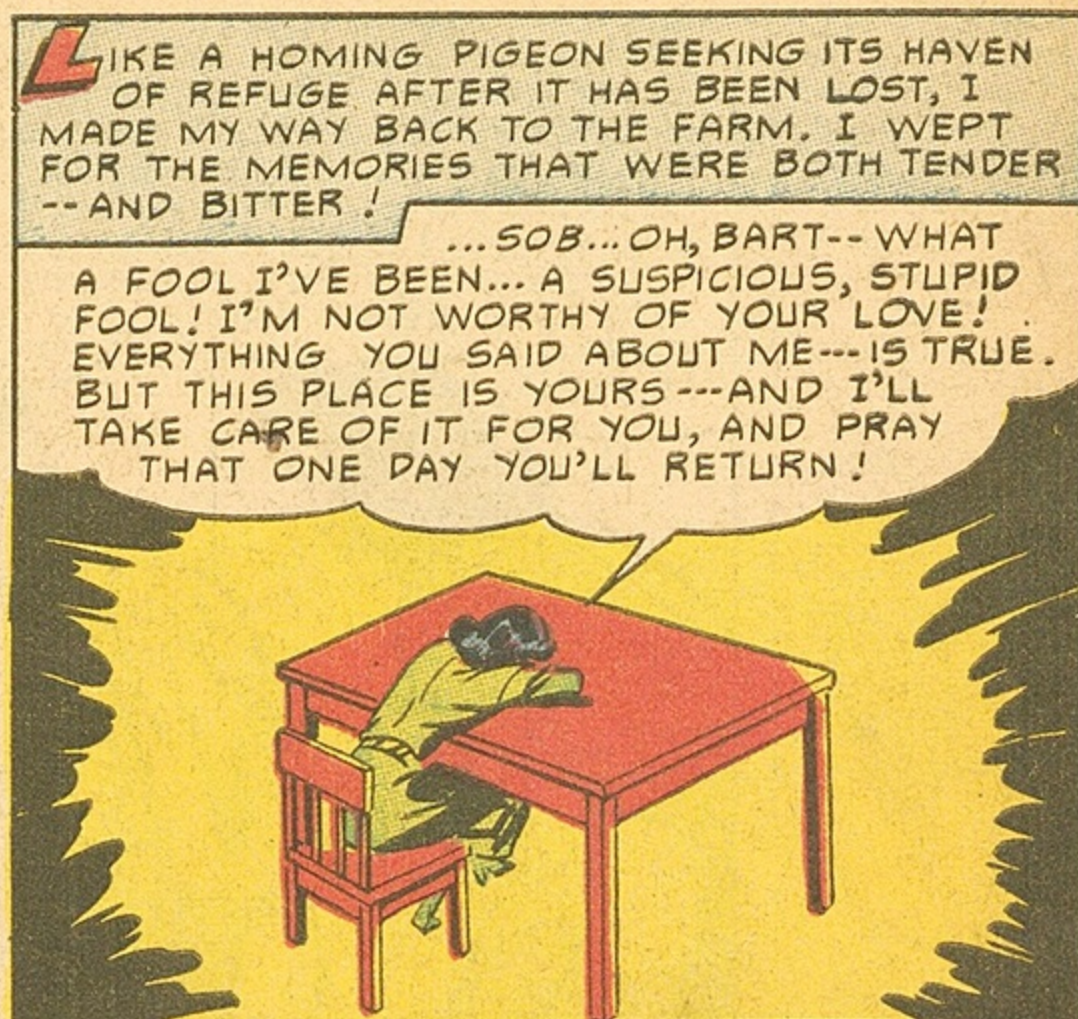
THEN HE REALLY DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT YOU--!





I KNEW SHE WAS TELLING THE TRUTH. IT ALL ADDED UP. HEARTSICK AND CONTRITE, I STUMBLED FROM THE OFFICE...

TELL HIM--TELL YOUR HUSBAND-- I--I CHANGED MY MIND ABOUT SELLING!



LIKE A HOMING PIGEON SEEKING ITS HAVEN OF REFUGE AFTER IT HAS BEEN LOST, I MADE MY WAY BACK TO THE FARM. I WEPT FOR THE MEMORIES THAT WERE BOTH TENDER --AND BITTER!

...SOB... OH, BART-- WHAT A FOOL I'VE BEEN... A SUSPICIOUS, STUPID FOOL! I'M NOT WORTHY OF YOUR LOVE! EVERYTHING YOU SAID ABOUT ME---IS TRUE. BUT THIS PLACE IS YOURS---AND I'LL TAKE CARE OF IT FOR YOU, AND PRAY THAT ONE DAY YOU'LL RETURN!

WITH THE AID OF A HIRED ELDERLY COUPLE, I KEPT THE FARM GOING --GIVING IT MY STRENGTH --MY HOPES --AND KEEPING THE HEARTACHE TO MYSELF. THE MONTHS SLIPPED BY-- LONELY MONTHS, AND MY ONLY CONSOLATION WAS THAT I HAD MANAGED TO PAY OFF THE FARM DEBTS



NORMA, DEAR-- YOUR FARM IS BOUND TO WIN SOME PRIZE AT THE FAIR! DON'T BE SO SAD, DEAR.

I-- I'M ONLY THINKING HOW MUCH I'D LIKE A CERTAIN PARTY TO BE HERE TO SEE IT WIN.



YOUR FARM HAS WON FIRST PRIZE, YOUNG LADY. ARE YOU THE OWNER OF THE FARM? WE'D LIKE YOUR NAME IN ORDER TO ANNOUNCE IT.

NO-- BART HADLEY IS THE OWNER! **BART HADLEY!**



FIRST PRIZE WINNER FOR THE MOST PRODUCTIVE FARM-- BART HADLEY! BART HADLEY!

THAT WAS A NICE GESTURE, NORMA!

BART!



JOHN PECK TOLD ME YOU PUT THE FARM BACK IN MY NAME. WHY? WHY DID YOU DO IT?

B-BECAUSE IT'S **YOURS!** ...SOB... IT'S ALWAYS BEEN YOURS, BART! I--I COULDN'T TAKE IT. I WAS JUST TAKING CARE OF IT --UNTIL--UNTIL YOU CAME BACK! OH, BART, IT'S SO GOOD TO SEE YOU AGAIN!



I GUESS EVERYTHING THEY TOLD ME IS-- IS TRUE! BUT I HAD TO COME SEE FOR MYSELF. WE'LL FORGET-- ABOUT CERTAIN THINGS, NORMA. YOU'VE PAID A BITTER PRICE FOR IT. BUT I'LL NEED SOMEBODY TO HELP ME WITH THE FARM --PERMANENTLY!

THAT'S ME, DARLING! ...SOB... I'LL BE THE BEST FARM WIFE YOU EVER SAW!

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